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EDITORIAL

## Equality's Ragged March

Last Tuesday's Election Day results showed how far the nation has traveled in the struggle for gay equality — and the distance still to go. The returns also added fresh urgency to promising efforts in New York, New Jersey and the District of Columbia to legalize marriage for same-sex couples.

Voters in Washington State approved a ballot measure endorsing a new law granting gay and lesbian couples the same state-provided benefits that heterosexual couples have.

In other good news, voters in Kalamazoo, Mich., declined to overturn a new law barring discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in housing, employment and public accommodations. Voters elected their first openly gay City Council members in St. Petersburg, Fla., and Detroit. Chapel Hill, N.C., elected its first openly gay mayor.

By sad contrast, voters in Maine — by a slim margin, and following an aggressive, narrow-minded campaign led by the forces of the religious right — repealed the state's new law extending the freedom to marry to same-sex couples.

Fights for justice rarely follow a linear path. Maine voters have approved anti-gay measures in the past only to reverse themselves in a subsequent election. We trust they will do so again on the issue of same-sex marriage. It is worth recalling, too, that fears of a devastating ripple effect from a similar ballot defeat a year ago in California proved unfounded.

Since that vote, three other states have joined Massachusetts and Connecticut in allowing same sex couples to marry. Another victory may lie ahead in the District of Columbia, where a local law legalizing same-sex marriage is moving toward approval.

The big battlegrounds now are New York and New Jersey. New York's governor, David Paterson, has called the Legislature back to Albany. The budget crisis heads the agenda, but gay rights must be there, too. The Assembly has already approved legislation giving same-sex couples the freedom to marry. Democratic leaders need to allow debate to proceed, and rally the Senate's 62 members to follow suit.

In New Jersey, Gov. Jon Corzine's loss to Christopher Christie means that the Legislature must move urgently to approve marriage equality. Mr. Corzine has said he would sign the bill. Mr. Christie has said he would veto it. Legislators must act before Jan. 19, when the government changes hands.

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