

September 16, 2008**EDITORIAL****Family Values**

Gov. David Paterson of New York did the right, fair and legally sound thing this year when he directed state agencies to recognize same-sex marriages performed outside the state. So we were heartened by the recent ruling by a state trial judge that upheld Mr. Paterson's executive order.

Gay couples still may not marry in New York. But the judge's decision follows a string of rulings that same-sex couples married elsewhere have a right to have their marital status honored in New York.

While opponents of gay marriage charged that the governor was usurping the Legislature's role, Mr. Paterson was prudently exercising his authority and protecting the state from litigation by gay couples married in places like Canada, Massachusetts or California.

For more than a century, New York has recognized marriage contracts from other states, even if those couples could not legally marry here. Unlike many other states, New York has not enshrined bigotry by prohibiting the state from recognizing same-sex marriages.

Marriage is "one of life's most significant events," Justice Lucy Billings of State Supreme Court in the Bronx wrote in her ruling, explaining the deeper reason for the state's recognition rule. And she said that "nothing is more antithetical to family stability" than failing to respect "that solemnized commitment."

New York's Democratic-controlled Assembly has passed a bill allowing same-sex couples to marry here. New York's Senate, which has long been under Republican control, must also do the right thing.

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