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EDITORIAL

'This Is a Question of Fairness'

It is by no means a fast and easy path, but the cause of same-sex marriage is moving forward — proof that justice can triumph over wedge politics and prejudice. It happened this week in Maine and New Hampshire, where both states' legislatures voted to legalize same-sex marriage and promptly put the final say to their governors.

In New Hampshire, Gov. John Lynch — who previously defined marriage as strictly between a man and a woman — promised his “best decision” after consulting lawmakers and constituents. Mr. Lynch would be wise also to consult his neighbor in Maine, Gov. John Baldacci, who signed his state's same-sex marriage bill. He previously had opposed the idea, with the familiar hedge of supporting the half-step of civil unions.

Mr. Baldacci described his change of heart — and what we hope is the changing sentiment of many other American politicians. “I have come to believe that this is a question of fairness and of equal protection under the law, and that a civil union is not equal to civil marriage,” he said. Precisely.

Maine was the fifth state to legalize same-sex marriage. We urge Mr. Lynch to make New Hampshire the sixth. Similar proposals are pending in other states, with a major debate expected in the New York Legislature.

This week, the City Council of the District of Columbia took a preliminary step, voting 12 to 1, to recognize marriages between gay people certified in other states. A fuller debate is anticipated on a proposal to legalize same-sex unions. Unfortunately, there already are calls for Congress to once more tread on home rule and block this progress in the nation's capital.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is right to caution against such grandstanding. Governor Baldacci heard the people speak. Congress should listen.

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