

**ANDREW J. SPANO, Westchester County Executive**  
**SUSAN TOLCHIN, Director of Communications**

**CONTACT: SUSAN TOLCHIN**  
**DONNA GREENE**

**(914) 995-2932**  
**(914) 995-2935**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 7, 2006**

**SPANO ANNOUNCES EXECUTIVE ORDER RECOGNIZING LEGAL  
SAME SEX MARRIAGES**

County Executive Andy Spano has signed an Executive Order stating that same sex marriages lawfully entered into outside of New York State will be recognized by the county government in the same manner as opposite sex marriages.

Spano announced the new order at the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) Town Hall Meeting, Wednesday at the Westchester County Center. The executive order applies to county departments, agencies and commissions.

"We need to value all types of loving, committed relationships," said Spano. "I want to be sure that all Westchester County services treat all valid marriages the same way."

Even though New York State currently does not allow same sex marriages, State Attorney General issued an opinion in 2004 that said that New York law requires the recognition of valid marriages entered into outside the state if these marriages were lawfully entered into in other jurisdictions. In the aftermath of that decision, a number of local governments acted to recognize these out-of-state same sex marriages, among them New York City, Nyack, Buffalo, Ithaca and Rochester. In addition, the state Comptroller's Office also recognized same sex marriages from outside the state for the purposes of the state retirement system.

"When the county's LGBT Advisory Board asked County Executive Spano to issue this Executive Order, he had an immediate positive reaction," said Laura Newman, the county's LGBT liaison. "I am so pleased that Westchester County will be added to the list of places in New York State where same sex couples will be treated fairly.

-- more--

Since 2002, Westchester has had a Domestic Partner Registry, where same sex couples (as well as unmarried heterosexual couples) have been able to register. While couples registered with the Domestic Partner Registry are not guaranteed access to benefits available to married couples – such as health insurance -- the registry makes it easier for those willing governments and employers to dispense such benefits fairly.

The county and state governments are among those governments that have extended health insurance benefits to the domestic partners of their employees.