

Testimony of Will Stephens
Vice Chair, Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission

Hearing before the Committee on Public Safety and the Judiciary
November 2, 2009

My name is Will Stephens, and I serve as the Vice Chair of the Dupont Circle Advisory Neighborhood Commission, ANC 2B. You already heard testimony today from our Chairperson, Mike Silverstein, and I heartily second his statement and his sentiments on this important bill.

I believe that our ANC was the very first to pass a resolution in support of marriage equality. In February 2009, we called upon the Council to pass legislation recognizing same-sex marriages entered into in other jurisdictions, as well as legislation recognizing same-sex marriages performed right here in the District. I commend the Council for following through on the first item earlier this year. I also commend Councilman Catania, our Ward 2 Councilman Jack Evans, Committee Chairman Mendelson, and all of the other co-sponsors of the current bill for their leadership and commitment to do the right thing.

As a happily married straight man, I was proud to author our initial February 2009 ANC resolution. Our October 2009 resolution, which specifically supports the current bill, was drafted by Commissioner Bob Meehan, the other straight married member of our ANC. As Commissioner Meehan joked, we may be straight, but not narrow.

I think it is no coincidence that two married straight guys felt so strongly as to draft these resolutions. There is nothing in my life that has brought me as much joy as my ten-year relationship with my wife Andrea. And five-and-a-half years ago, as Beyoncé might say, I put a ring on it.

I still feel an emotional thrill whenever I reminisce about the day in May 2004 when we celebrated our relationship in Austin, Texas with our families, our friends, a Latin jazz trio, and an open bar with unlimited frozen margaritas. And though we could still have had a celebration without it, that piece of paper we got from the county courthouse meant that it was real – that our lifetime commitment was recognized not only by our own friends and family, but by our neighbors, our colleagues, our doctors, our bank, our courts, and our fellow citizens. It meant that we got hospital visitation rights along with our frozen margaritas.

Everyone deserves to have that same thrill – to think back on a glorious day when they celebrated their relationship with the most important people in their lives, and when the entire community – acting through the government – recognized that they were for real. It is simply unfair for the government to deny someone that happy moment – whether they were born rich or poor, black or white, gay or straight – or even if they prefer a piña colada. No matter what their celebratory beverage of choice, I look forward to some day in the near future when I can raise a glass at the wedding reception of one of our gay friends – right here in the District – and say, “Welcome to our happy club! I am so glad that you could join us.” Thank you.

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