

Shoulders To Stand On August, 2011

For many of us our overwhelming consumption with working for Marriage Equality in New York, has not left much time to look at the history of this movement in New York State which actually began with the women's rights movement in the United States at a convention in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. Elizabeth Cady Stanton presented the *Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions*, calling for legal equality for women. The document asserted that "all men and women are created equal" and deserve equal rights, including the franchise and equality within *marriage*. The Fight for Marriage Rights has continued in New York for the past 163 years.

38 DAYS AGO ON JUNE 24, 2011 THE FIGHT FOR MARRIAGE ENDED IN VICTORY. Marriage Equality is now a reality for the Rochester and New York LGBT community. The complete dated history of this struggle can be found on line. Shoulders To Stand On would like to look at the preceding months leading up to the passage of this historic legislation.

On Feb 2, 2011 USA Today announced that Barbara Bush, one of ex-president George W. Bush's twin daughters, made a video in support of Marriage Equality New York. In the video, she says, "I'm Barbara Bush, and I'm a New Yorker for *marriage equality*. *New York* is about fairness and equality, and everyone should have the right to marry the person they love."

On Feb. 23, 2011 in a historic show of support for equal treatment under the law, the Obama administration announced today that it will no longer defend the discriminatory "Defense of Marriage Act" (DOMA) in court. In a statement, Attorney General Eric Holder said that President Obama has concluded that Section 3 of DOMA is unconstitutional because it fails to meet the legal standard – "heightened scrutiny" – that applies when the government treats gay people and straight people differently.

On Mar 16, 2011 a bill was introduced in the House of Representatives that would repeal the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and provide federal protections for married same-sex couples by recognizing marriages that are already recognized by states. The Respect for Marriage Act was introduced by Reps. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Barney Frank (D-MA), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Jared Polis (D-CO), David Cicilline (D-RI) and John Conyers (D-MI), as well as over 100 additional members of the House of Representatives.

On Friday, April 8, 2011 a statewide task force convened in Albany to begin implementing the [Dignity for All Students Act](#) – a new law that protects New York State public school students from bullying and bias-based harassment.

Tuesday, Apr 19, 2011 The Empire State Pride Agenda, the [Human Rights Campaign](#), Freedom to Marry and *Marriage Equality New York* formed a single organization called [New Yorkers United for Marriage](#) to fight for the passage of Marriage Equality in New York.

By the end of April, Marriage Equality advocates needed to gain the votes of six more senators to ensure passage of the legislation. A Siena College poll found a new high of 58 percent in favor of passage, and Cuomo spokesman Richard Bamberger said, "The governor is committed to working with New Yorkers to get the *marriage equality* legislation passed."

On May 26, 2011 New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg delivered a significant address Thursday afternoon in which he made an intellectual and personal case for the *marriage equality* bill that could come before the state legislature within weeks.

Then on June 14, 2011 Governor Andrew Cuomo addressed New Yorkers in these words:

“New Yorkers have a proud, progressive history as national leaders towards greater equality and respect for all. From the fight for women’s suffrage to the struggle for civil rights, New Yorkers have been on the right side of history. Indeed New Yorkers have made history.

But on the issue of marriage equality, New York has fallen behind. Same-sex couples are denied rights that other New Yorkers take for granted. Same-sex couples are denied over 1000 federal and 700 state rights that are afforded to millions of others. Rights as basic as being able to visit the person you love in the emergency room. The opportunity to protect and care for one another. The freedom to express their lifelong commitment. And the basic dignity of having that relationship recognized by the state they call home.

This is a matter of fairness and equality. It is not a question of religion or culture but a question of legal rights and government policy. When it comes to fighting for what’s right, New Yorkers wrote the book, and marriage equality is the next chapter of our civil rights story. It’s hard to imagine today, but at one time it was illegal for an interracial couple to marry in this country. We have come a long way and now it is time to go even further.

So please join me in supporting marriage equality, equality for all New Yorkers. Contact your state legislators and urge them to vote yes on marriage equality.

Thank you.”

On June 15, 2011 The New York Civil Liberties Union applauded the State Assembly for taking an important step toward making marriage for lesbian and gay New Yorkers legal in New York State by passing the marriage bill 80 to 63, and called on the State Senate to quickly pass the same bill. “The State Assembly has joined Governor Cuomo and stood up for fairness, equality, family and love,” NYCLU Executive Director Donna Lieberman said. “Now it’s time for the State Senate to get on the right side of history and pass the marriage bill.”

Before the Senate voted on June 24, 2011 the New York Civil Liberties Union and the American Civil Liberties Union issued the following statement:

“We have reviewed the entire bill, including the latest amendments, and we urge the Legislature to pass the Marriage Equality Act immediately. This long overdue legislation allows same-sex couples the freedom to marry and protect their families. The Marriage Equality Act also respects the right of clergy, churches and religious organizations to decide for themselves which marriages they will or will not solemnize or celebrate in keeping with our country’s principles of religious freedom.

The time for political posturing and delay has passed, and now is the time for New York to stand on the right side of history.”

June 24, 2011 10:30pm Marriage Equality Bill passes 33 – 29

June 24, 2011 11:55pm Governor Andrew Cuomo signs Marriage Equality Bill

"New York has finally torn down the barrier that has prevented same-sex couples from exercising the freedom to marry and from receiving the fundamental protections that so many couples and families take for granted," Governor Cuomo said. "With the world watching, the Legislature, by a bipartisan vote, has said that all New Yorkers are equal under the law. With this vote, marriage equality will become a reality in our state, delivering long overdue fairness and legal security to thousands of New Yorkers."

Shoulders To Stand On is proud of both the Democratic and Republican shoulders that voted to pass the Marriage Equality Bill, for Governor Andrew Cuomo who is a man of his word, and for the pillars in our own community who have worked tirelessly to make Marriage Equality a reality – Anne Tischer, Todd Plank, Courtney Bette Miche.