

CONGRESS OF SECULAR JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

Social Action Committee Statement On Same-Sex Marriage

The Social Action Committee of the Congress of Secular Jewish Organizations, CSJO, consisting of 26 affiliate groups in North America and England, affirms its support for legal recognition of same-sex marriages. We call for an end to all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and for the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act.

We join other progressive movements in Jewish life at the forefront of the three decade long struggle to affirm gay and lesbian (and bisexual and transgendered) identities and affirmatively seek to include gay and lesbian Jews in our institutions and communities. This solidarity is based on our own long historical experience as abused outsiders; as *conversos* or hidden Jews, forced into a closet to preserve our lives; as a people who saw gay men wearing the pink triangle and suffering persecution in Nazi concentration camps. Our history reinforces our moral imperative to offer our solidarity to all minorities subjected to discrimination and violence.

As Secular and Cultural Jews, we are particularly aware of the hypocrisy of religiously-based opposition to same-sex marriages. Those who quote the book of Leviticus to condemn homosexuality are playing a game of highly selective religious observance, insofar as there are scores of other prohibitions and punishments in Leviticus that they ignore. We therefore urge religious activists in the Jewish community and beyond to find within their traditions the teachings of tolerance and acceptance and to counterpose these to the dehumanizing preachings of the religious right.

Fear and hatred of homosexuals is, thankfully, diminishing in American life as we expand our notions of who is entitled to basic human rights. The American psychiatric establishment removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1973. The Supreme Court decriminalized gay sex by rejecting as unconstitutional all state sodomy laws in 2003.

And while it is part of the democratic process to mobilize religious principles in support of, or opposition to, government policies, the right of all people to seek "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" — not Leviticus 20:13 or any other biblical passage — is what we hold sacred as America's creed. We are confident, therefore, that we will see the right of gay and lesbian Americans to marry their beloved ones established soon and in our own time, just as we saw the right of interracial couples to marry established in the last generation. We pledge ourselves to participate in the struggles to bring about this fulfillment of the U.S. Constitution.

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