

A DAY OF PRIDE



Julia Moore
Daily Tidings

GINA DUQUENNE, RIGHT, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF SOUTHERN OREGON PRIDE, applauds with her partner, Josh Willow, during a rally on Ashland's Plaza Wednesday after the Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act.

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U.S. Supreme Court grants equal status to same-sex couples.

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Locals celebrate ruling on gay marriage

By **Amanda Barker**
For the Tidings

Overjoyed same-sex couples waved their rainbow flags in unison early Wednesday afternoon in Ashland's Plaza to celebrate the Supreme Court's ruling that the federal Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court decided Wednesday that legally married same-sex couples should get the

same federal benefits as heterosexual couples. It invalidated a provision of DOMA that has prevented married gay couples from receiving tax, health and retirement benefits that are generally available to married couples. The vote was 5-4.

Nearly 100 people gathered in the center of Ashland's Plaza, among them founder and president of Southern Oregon Pride, Gina DuQuenne.

"DOMA dead means our constitutional rights will be recognized," DuQuenne said.

"It's in the Constitution that all men are created equal, and the overturn of DOMA is

abolishing that discrimination."

The ruling doesn't affect Oregon, where same-sex marriage has been banned since 2004. And the court rejected an argument to extend the recognition of full federal benefits to couples in domestic partnerships and civil unions.

Julie McClendon, 46, and Ramona Driggers, 51, of Ashland have been in a domestic partnership for five years and said they are unable to receive federal benefits afforded married couples because they cannot legally marry in Oregon.

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SCARLET PASSMOR, 21, celebrates with others on the Plaza.

Pride

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“We have to overturn the ban on marriage to make marriage equal for all here,” McClendon said. “Otherwise, we are just domestic partners with unequal rights.”

The Supreme Court heard the case of *United States v. Windsor*, in which Edie Windsor was required to pay more than \$300,000 in federal estate taxes after the death of her partner — something she argued she would not have had to pay if she were in an opposite-sex relationship.

Maryline White, 92, of Ashland said she faced the same challenges when her partner of 42 years died. She said though they considered themselves married, they weren’t in the eyes of the law.

“The overturn of DOMA means any person who loves another person can get married and receive federal benefits, which is something I did not have,” she said.

Gov. John Kitzhaber issued a statement calling the court’s decisions “a proud moment for the nation,” but said the state still needed to catch up.

“Oregon has not yet lived up to the ideal of equal rights for all,” Kitzhaber said. “When we talk about the freedom to marry, we’re talking about the basic equality we demand for every person.”

Oregon voters in 2004 passed Measure 36, a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

Bryan Platt, who lobbied for Measure 36 when he was chairman of the Jackson County Republican Central Committee, said that two men or two women do not create a marriage.

“DOMA attempts to politically redefine what a marriage is, which is wrong,” he said. “Children raised in a home without the gendered mother and father don’t have the same opportunities in learning or in their behavioral patterns.”

Supporters of same-sex marriage say the Supreme Court’s rulings will bolster a statewide campaign to get a measure on the ballot next year to reverse Oregon’s ban. Jeana Frazzini, leader of Basic Rights Oregon, said Oregon could be the only state with such a measure in 2014 — putting the state in the spotlight.

Frazzini’s group is readying one of two such similarly-worded measures for a signature drive. The group needs to obtain more than 116,000 signatures to appear on the 2014 ballot.

Polling has shown a shift in Oregon on attitudes toward same-sex marriage since 2004. Successful pushes for same-sex marriage in Maryland, Maine and neighboring Washington state — where some Oregon couples have married — emboldened the petitioners before 2014.

“DOMA is gone and marriage equality is marching forward,” DuQuenne said. “This is only the beginning of something big.”