



SPONSOR: Rep. M. Smith & Rep. Schwartzkopf & Rep. Longhurst & Sen. Sokola & Sen. Blevins  
Reps. Barbieri, Baumbach, Bolden, Brady, Heffernan, Keeley, Kowalko, Mulrooney, Osienski, Ramone, B. Short, Viola, D.E. Williams, K. Williams; Sens. McDowell, Peterson, Poore, Townsend

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
147th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE BILL NO. 75

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 13 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO DOMESTIC RELATIONS TO PROVIDE FOR SAME-GENDER CIVIL MARRIAGE AND TO CONVERT EXISTING CIVIL UNIONS TO CIVIL MARRIAGES.

1 WHEREAS, it is the intent of the Delaware General Assembly to establish civil marriage equality for all families  
2 by allowing two persons to marry regardless of their genders, to recognize same-gender marriages and substantially similar  
3 legal unions solemnized outside of Delaware as marriages, to convert existing civil unions previously solemnized in  
4 Delaware to civil marriages, and to clarify that persons in a same-gender marriage shall enjoy all the rights, benefits and  
5 protections, and shall be subject to all the same responsibilities, obligations and duties as different-gender married persons  
6 under Delaware law.

7 NOW, THEREFORE:

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

9 Section 1. Amend §101, Title 13 of the Delaware Code by making insertions as shown by underlining and  
10 deletions as shown by strike through as follows:

11 § 101. Void and voidable marriages.

12 (a) A marriage is prohibited and void between a person and his or her ancestor, descendant, brother, sister,  
13 half brother, half sister, uncle, aunt, niece, nephew, or first cousin ~~or between persons of the same gender.~~

14 (b) A marriage is prohibited, and is void from the time its nullity is declared by a court of competent  
15 jurisdiction at the instance of the innocent party, if either party thereto is:

16 (1)-(5) [Repealed.]

17 (6) Divorced, unless a certified copy of the divorce decree (last decree if such person has been  
18 divorced more than once) or a certificate of such divorce from the clerk of the court granting the divorce is  
19 inspected by the clerk of the peace to whom such person makes application for a marriage license, and  
20 unless such person may in other respects lawfully marry; and, if such decree or certificate cannot be

21 obtained, the Resident Judge of the county where such license is desired or the person designated by the  
22 Resident Judge to grant such certificates as may be accepted under this paragraph may grant a certificate of  
23 the facts as stated by the applicant and the certificate may, for the purposes of this chapter, be accepted in  
24 lieu of a certified copy of a divorce decree;

25 (7) On probation or parole from any court or institution, unless such person first files with the clerk  
26 of the peace to whom such person makes application for a marriage license a written consent to such  
27 person's proposed marriage from the chief officer of such court or institution or from someone who is  
28 appointed by such officer to give such consent, and unless in other respects the applicant may lawfully  
29 marry.

30 (c) [Repealed.]

31 (d) A marriage obtained or recognized outside the State between persons prohibited by subsection (a) of this  
32 section shall not constitute a legal or valid marriage within the State.

33 (e) For all purposes of the laws of this State, two persons of the same gender who are parties to a legal union other  
34 than a marriage (whether designated as a civil union, a domestic partnership or another relationship) established  
35 in another jurisdiction shall be afforded and shall be subject to the same rights, benefits, protections,  
36 responsibilities, obligations and duties as are afforded and imposed upon married spouses (whether derived from  
37 statutes, administrative rules or regulations, court rules, governmental policies, common law, court decisions, or  
38 any other provisions or sources of law, including in equity) if:

39 (1) such legal union was validly entered into in such other jurisdiction;

40 (2) such legal union would not be prohibited as a marriage by reason of subsection (a) of this  
41 section; and

42 (3) such legal union affords and imposes on such individuals under the laws of the jurisdiction  
43 establishing such union substantially the same rights, benefits, protections, responsibilities, obligations and  
44 duties as a marriage.

45 Section 2. Amend §106, Title 13 of the Delaware Code by making insertions as shown by underlining as  
46 follows:

47 § 106. Solemnization of marriages; production of license; penalty; registration of persons authorized to  
48 solemnize marriages.

49 (a) A clergyperson or minister of any religion, current and former Judges of this State's Supreme Court,  
50 Superior Court, Family Court, Court of Chancery, Court of Common Pleas, Justice of the Peace Court, federal

51 Judges, federal Magistrates, clerks of the peace of various counties and current and former judges from other  
52 jurisdictions with written authorization by the clerk of the peace from the county in Delaware where the  
53 ceremony is to be performed may solemnize marriages between persons who may lawfully enter into the  
54 matrimonial relation. The Clerk of the Peace in each county for good cause being shown may:

55 (1) Allow by written permit within that Clerk's respective county, any duly sworn member of  
56 another state's judiciary, to solemnize marriages in the State between persons who may lawfully enter into the  
57 matrimonial relation.

58 (2) Allow by written permit within that Clerk's respective county, the Clerk of the Peace from  
59 another county within the State to solemnize marriages in the State between persons who may lawfully enter  
60 into the matrimonial relation.

61 Within the limits of any incorporated municipality, the Mayor thereof may solemnize marriages between persons  
62 who may lawfully enter into matrimonial relation. Marriages shall be solemnized in the presence of at least 2  
63 reputable witnesses who shall sign the certificate of marriage as prescribed by this chapter. Marriages may also be  
64 solemnized or contracted according to the forms and usages of any religious society. No marriage shall be  
65 solemnized or contracted without the production of a license issued pursuant to this chapter.

66 (b) For purposes of this section, the words "resident of this State" shall include the son or daughter of a person  
67 who has been domiciled within the State for 1 year or more, notwithstanding the actual place of residence of the son or  
68 daughter immediately prior to the date of the marriage.

69 (c) In the case of absence or disability of the duly elected Clerk of the Peace, the chief deputy or, if there is no  
70 chief deputy, a deputy employed in the office of the Clerk of the Peace, shall be authorized to solemnize marriages.

71 (d) Whoever, not being authorized by this section, solemnizes a marriage, shall be fined \$100, and in default of  
72 the payment of such fine shall be imprisoned not more than 30 days, and such marriage shall be void, unless it is in other  
73 respects lawful and is consummated with the full belief of either of the parties in its validity.

74 (e) Other than as provided in this subsection, nothing in this section shall be construed to require any person  
75 (including any clergy person or minister of any religion) authorized to solemnize a marriage to solemnize any marriage, and  
76 no such authorized person who fails or refuses for any reason to solemnize a marriage shall be subject to any fine or other  
77 penalty for such failure or refusal. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, a clerk of the peace who issues a marriage  
78 license, or a deputy thereof, shall be required to perform a solemnization of such marriage if requested by the applicants for  
79 such license.

80 Section 3. Amend §122(a), Title 13 of the Delaware Code by making insertions as shown by underlining  
81 as follows:

82 § 122. Marriage license application.

83 (a) The marriage license application shall be in the form prescribed and provided by the Department of  
84 Health and Social Services and shall be permanently preserved by the issuing officer in the manner as  
85 prescribed by the Department of Health and Social Services. The marriage license application shall include the  
86 following information and such other information as prescribed by the Department of Health and Social  
87 Services: Date of application, full name, sex, race, social security number, birth date and occupation of  
88 applicants, names and addresses of parents of applicants, date and place of previous marriages, civil unions,  
89 domestic partnerships or other substantially similar legal unions, and termination of previous marriages, civil  
90 unions, domestic partnerships or other substantially similar legal unions, place and court where applicants are  
91 on probation or parole, if such they be, and time of application.

92 Section 4. Amend Chapter 1, Title 13 of the Delaware Code by adding a new section by making insertions  
93 as shown by underlining as follows:

94 § 129. Equal Treatment of Marital Relationships.

95 (a) All laws of this State applicable to marriage or married spouses or the children of married spouses, whether  
96 derived from statutes, administrative rules or regulations, court rules, governmental policies, common law, court decisions,  
97 or any other provisions or sources of law, including in equity, shall apply equally to same-gender and different-gender  
98 married couples and their children.

99 (b) Parties to a marriage shall be included in any definition or use of terms such as “dependent”, “family”,  
100 “husband”, “wife”, "widow", "widower", “immediate family”, “next of kin”, “spouse”, “stepparent”, “tenants by the  
101 entirety” and other terms, whether or not gender specific, that denote a spousal or familial relationship, or a person in a  
102 spousal or familial relationship, as those terms are used throughout the Code, administrative rules or regulations, court  
103 rules, governmental policies, common law, court decisions, or any other provisions or sources of the laws of this State,  
104 including in equity, regardless of whether the parties to a marriage are the same gender or different genders.

105 (c) To the extent that provisions of the laws of this State, whether derived from statutes, administrative rules or  
106 regulations, court rules, governmental policies, common law, court decisions, or any other provisions or sources of law,  
107 including in equity, adopt, refer to, or rely upon in any manner, provisions of United States federal law that would have the  
108 effect of treating differently same-gender married spouses or their children as compared to different-gender married spouses  
109 or their children, same-gender married spouses and their children shall be treated in all respects by the laws of this State as

110 if United States federal law recognizes a marriage between persons of the same gender in the same manner as the laws of  
111 this State.

112 (d) The rights of same-gender married spouses, with respect to a child of whom either spouse becomes the parent  
113 during their marriage, shall be the same as the rights (including presumptions of parentage, paternity and maternity in  
114 chapter 8 of this title) of different-gender married spouses with respect to a child of whom either spouse becomes the parent  
115 during their marriage.

116 (e) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in, and in addition to any other rights afforded under, Title  
117 16, chapter 31 of this Code, if a married person is the legal parent of a child at the birth of the child, including pursuant to  
118 subsection (d) of this section, such person shall be entitled to have his or her name entered on the original certificate of birth  
119 as a parent of the child.

120 (f) All persons who enter into same-gender marriages that are solemnized in this State or are created by  
121 conversion from a civil union under the laws of this State consent to the nonexclusive jurisdiction of the Family Court of  
122 this State for all proceedings for divorce and annulment of such marriage, even if one or both parties no longer reside in this  
123 State, as set forth in § 1504 of this title.

124 Section 5. Amend §213, Title 13 of the Delaware Code by deleting the section in its entirety as shown by strike  
125 through as follows:

126 ~~§ 213. Legal unions performed in other jurisdictions.~~

127 ~~A legal union between 2 individuals of the same sex that was validly formed in another jurisdiction, regardless of~~  
128 ~~whether such legal union is recognized under Chapter 1 of this title or is referred to as a civil union, shall be recognized as a~~  
129 ~~validly established civil union under this chapter for all purposes of the laws of this State, provided that the legal union~~  
130 ~~meets the eligibility requirements of § 202 of this title for a civil union and such legal union affords to and imposes on the~~  
131 ~~parties thereto substantially similar rights, benefits, protections, responsibilities and duties as those afforded to and imposed~~  
132 ~~on parties to a civil union entered into in this State under this chapter.~~

133 Section 6. Amend Chapter 2, Title 13 of the Delaware Code by adding a new section by making insertions as  
134 shown by underlining as follows:

135 § 218. Conversion of Civil Unions to Marriages.

136 (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of this chapter, no civil union licenses shall be issued, no persons shall be  
137 eligible to enter into new civil unions, and no new civil unions shall be solemnized, on or after July 1, 2013.

138 (b) Notwithstanding any provision of chapter 1 of this title, on or after July 1, 2013, and prior to July 1, 2014,  
139 both parties to a civil union entered into pursuant to this chapter may apply to the clerk of the peace in the county in which

140 their civil union license was issued, for a marriage license, in accordance with procedures established by such clerk of the  
141 peace, to have their civil union legally converted to a marriage by operation of law without requirement of solemnization,  
142 provided that such civil union has not been previously dissolved or annulled and is not subject to a pending proceeding for  
143 dissolution, annulment or legal separation. Upon application for a marriage license in accordance with such procedures,  
144 such parties shall be issued a certificate of marriage and the civil union of such parties shall be converted to a marriage by  
145 operation of law. For all purposes of the laws of this State, the effective date of such marriage shall be deemed to be the  
146 date of solemnization of such original civil union.

147 Alternatively, on or after July 1, 2013, and prior to July 1, 2014, both parties to a civil union entered into pursuant  
148 to this chapter may apply to the clerk of the peace, in the county in which their civil union license was issued, for a  
149 marriage license pursuant to chapter 1 of this title and such parties may have such marriage solemnized, prior to July 1,  
150 2014, pursuant to chapter 1 of this title, provided that such persons are otherwise eligible to marry under § 101 of this title,  
151 such civil union has not been previously dissolved or annulled, and such civil union is not subject to a pending proceeding  
152 for dissolution, annulment or legal separation. Upon the solemnization of such marriage, the civil union of such parties  
153 shall be converted at such time to a marriage by operation of law. For all purposes of the laws of this State, the effective  
154 date of such marriage shall be deemed to be the date of solemnization of such original civil union.

155 (c) Subject to subsection (d) of this section, on July 1, 2014, two persons who are parties to a civil union entered  
156 into pursuant to this chapter, which civil union has not been converted to a marriage pursuant to subsection (b) of this  
157 section, shall be deemed married under chapter 1 of this title and such civil union shall be automatically converted to a  
158 marriage by operation of law. Upon application by either party to the clerk of the peace of the county in which their civil  
159 union license was issued, in accordance with procedures established by such clerk of the peace, such party shall be issued a  
160 certificate of marriage, without any requirement for solemnization of such marriage. For all purposes of the laws of this  
161 State, the effective date of such marriage shall be deemed to be the date of solemnization of such original civil union.

162 (d) Notwithstanding subsection (c) of this section, parties to a civil union with respect to which a proceeding for  
163 dissolution, annulment or legal separation is pending on July 1, 2014 shall not be deemed to be married on such date and  
164 their civil union shall not be converted to a marriage by operation of law pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, and such  
165 civil union shall continue to be governed by the provisions of chapter 2 of this title and the laws relating to civil unions in  
166 effect prior to July 1, 2013; provided, however, that if any such proceeding is terminated without resulting in the dissolution  
167 or annulment of the civil union and the parties remain in a civil union, such civil union shall be automatically converted to a  
168 marriage by operation of law. Upon application by either party to the clerk of the peace of the county in which their civil  
169 union license was issued, in accordance with procedures established by such clerk of the peace, such party shall be issued a

170 certificate of marriage, without requirement of solemnization of such marriage. For all purposes of the laws of this State,  
171 the effective date of such marriage shall be deemed to be the date of solemnization of such original civil union.

172 (e) For purposes of determining the legal rights and responsibilities of parties to a civil union entered into in this  
173 State that has been converted to a marriage under this chapter, the date of the solemnization of the original civil union shall  
174 be the date by which the origination of legal rights and responsibilities are determined.

175 Section 7. Amend §1504, Title 13 of the Delaware Code by making insertions as shown by underlining as  
176 follows:

177 § 1504. Jurisdiction; residence; procedure.

178 (a) The Family Court of the State has jurisdiction over all actions for divorce and annulment of marriage where  
179 either petitioner or respondent, at the time the action was commenced, actually resided in this State, or was stationed in this  
180 State as a member of the armed services of the United States, continuously for 6 or more months immediately preceding the  
181 commencement of the action. Notwithstanding the immediately preceding sentence, in addition to any other basis for  
182 jurisdiction it may otherwise have, the Family Court of this State has jurisdiction over all proceedings for divorce and  
183 annulment of same-gender marriages that are solemnized in this State or created by conversion of civil unions pursuant to  
184 the laws of this State, notwithstanding that the domicile or residency of the petitioner and the respondent are not in this  
185 State, if the jurisdiction of domicile or residency of the petitioner and/or the respondent does not by law affirmatively  
186 permit such a proceeding to be brought in the courts of that jurisdiction. If neither of the parties to a same-gender marriage  
187 solemnized in this State or created by conversion of a civil union pursuant to the laws of this State reside in this State, any  
188 petition for divorce or annulment of such marriage shall be filed in the county in which one or both of such parties last  
189 resided in this State.

190 Section 8. Religious Freedom. Nothing in this Act is intended to, nor shall this Act be construed in a manner that  
191 would, violate any person's rights under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or §§1, 2 or 5 of Article I of  
192 the Constitution of this State, including protected rights of freedom of religion thereunder. Nothing in this Act shall  
193 interfere with or regulate the religious practice of any religious society. Any religious society is free to choose which  
194 marriages it will solemnize.

195 Section 9. Rules of Construction.

196 (a) The rule of construction that statutes in derogation of the common law are to be strictly construed shall have  
197 no application to the provisions of this Act. This Act, and the statutes enacted hereby, shall be broadly construed to  
198 accomplish their intended purposes.

199 (b) The rule of construction that specific statutory provisions should prevail over general statutory provisions shall  
200 have no application to this Act except to the extent that the provisions of this Act are considered specific as opposed to  
201 general provisions.

202 Section 10. Except as expressly set forth herein, this Act does not affect rights, duties or obligations that matured  
203 or were owed, penalties that were incurred, or proceedings that were begun, before its effective date.

204 Section 11. If any provision of this Act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the  
205 invalidity does not affect other provisions or applications of the Act which can be given effect without the invalid provision  
206 or application; and, to that end, the provisions of this Act are declared to be severable.

207 Section 12. This Act may be referred to as the "Civil Marriage Equality and Religious Freedom Act of 2013".

208 Section 13. This Act shall be effective on July 1, 2013.

#### SYNOPSIS

This Act repeals the prohibition on same-gender marriage that was enacted in 1996. The effect of this Act is to allow two individuals, whether of the same or different genders, to marry if otherwise eligible. Upon the effectiveness of this Act, no new civil unions will be formed in Delaware. This Act allows both parties to a civil union that is not subject to a pending proceeding for dissolution, annulment or legal separation to convert their civil union to a marriage prior to July 1, 2014 by application for a marriage license to the clerk of the peace of the county in which their civil union license was issued, with or without further solemnization of such marriage. On July 1, 2014, all remaining civil unions not currently subject to a proceeding for dissolution, annulment or legal separation will automatically convert to marriages.

This Act also provides that for legal unions other than marriages between two persons of the same gender established in another jurisdiction, both parties to such legal union will be afforded the same rights, benefits and protections, and will be subject to the same responsibilities, obligations and duties, as a marriage for purposes of Delaware law. In order for such recognition to apply, such union must be validly formed in such other jurisdiction, the parties thereto must meet the eligibility requirements to enter into a marriage in the State of Delaware, and such union must afford and impose on the parties thereto substantially the same rights, benefits, protections, responsibilities, obligations and duties of marriage.

This Act provides for the equal application of all laws of the State of Delaware relating to marriage, married spouses or their children to same-gender or different-gender married spouses and their children.

This Act protects religious freedoms of religious societies and other persons. The Act specifically protects the freedom of religion guaranteed under the United States Constitution and the Delaware Constitution. Further, the Act specifies that it shall not interfere with or regulate the religious practice of any religious society. Any religious society is free to choose which marriages it will solemnize, and religious societies, clergypersons and ministers of any religion will not be required to solemnize any marriage that does not conform to its religious beliefs.

This Act becomes effective on July 1, 2013.