

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 90 (Delegate Burns)  
Judiciary

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Same Sex Marriages - Foreign Jurisdictions - Invalidity

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This bill provides that a marriage between two individuals of the same sex that is validly entered into in another state or in a foreign country is not valid in Maryland. Marriages between individuals of the same sex are against the public policy of this State. A foreign marriage is defined as being between a man and a woman.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill does not affect governmental operations or finances as it reflects current practice.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Potential minimal.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Only a marriage between a man and a woman is valid in this State. “Foreign marriage” means a marriage ceremony performed outside of Maryland and in which one or both of the parties were or are citizens of Maryland.

**Background:** Under the Full Faith and Credit Clause of the U.S. Constitution, states are required to give full faith and credit to the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of every other state. Therefore, Maryland will recognize foreign marriages that are validly entered into in another state. For example, Maryland will recognize a common law marriage from a foreign jurisdiction, although common law marriages are not valid in Maryland. *Henderson v. Henderson*, 199 Md. 449 (1952).

However, the Full Faith and Credit Clause does not require a state to apply another state's law in violation of its own legitimate public policy. See *Nevada v. Hall*, 440 U.S. 410 (1979). Similarly, the *Henderson* court stated that Maryland is not bound to give effect to marriage laws that are "repugnant to its own laws and policy." 199 Md. at 459. Since 1973, Maryland law has provided that only a marriage between a man and a woman is valid in this State. The Office of Attorney General has advised that the Maryland law prohibiting same-sex marriage would create a valid public policy exception to the general rule that marriages valid where performed are valid anywhere (*Advice of Counsel Letter to the Honorable Joseph. F. Vallario, Jr., Chairman, House Judiciary Committee, February 24, 2004*).

The federal Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 defines marriage as a legal union between a man and a woman and provides that states are not required to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. Five states (Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont) and the District of Columbia authorize marriage for couples of the same sex. The District of Columbia law was enacted in 2009 and the jurisdiction plans to issue same-sex marriage licenses beginning in March 2010, barring any prohibition by Congress. While the California Supreme Court decision establishing same-sex marriage was overturned in 2008 by passage of the Proposition 8 referendum, those couples married before the referendum's passage are still regarded as married under California law.

Forty-one states (including Maryland) have passed laws that either prohibit same-sex marriages or deny recognition of same-sex marriages solemnized in another jurisdiction. Thirty states have adopted constitutional amendments defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman. The District of Columbia and the states of New York and Rhode Island have enacted legislation that authorizes recognition of the same-sex marriages solemnized in other states or foreign countries.

**Local Fiscal Effect:** The counties of Anne Arundel, Charles, Montgomery, and Somerset advise that the bill will not have a fiscal effect. In Montgomery County, the bill will not affect county benefits extended to same-sex couples since qualification for the benefits is not contingent on marital status.

**Small Business Effect:** A small business could be affected by this bill to the extent that a member of a same-sex marriage is a debtor of or employed by the business.

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## Additional Information

**Prior Introductions:** HB 693 of 2005 received an unfavorable report from the House Judiciary Committee. In 2004, HB 728 received an unfavorable report from the House Judiciary Committee. Its cross file, SB 746, was heard in the Judicial Proceedings Committee, but received no further action. Similar legislation was introduced in the 2001 and 1996 sessions.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, and Somerset counties; Office of the Attorney General; Judiciary (Administrative Office of the Courts); National Conference of State Legislatures; *wtop news radio*; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 25, 2010  
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