

DOMA Ruled Unconstitutional by United States Supreme Court

Unconstitutional, that's what the supreme court rules the Defense Of Marriage Act. Now, same-sex couples in states that legalize their marriages, like New York, Massachusetts, and Vermont, can have both state and federal benefits. "The federal government can not discriminate against legally married same-sex couples, that's in some ways the bottom line," Union College professor Bradley Hays tells us. "The federal employee group life insurance program, federal employee's health benefits program, those are two huge key factors for federal employees that are same sex couples those benefits will be awarded to them," Graig Zappia, Partner at Tully Rinckey adds. That's just a start, legally married same sex couples can now file joint tax returns, and can have access to their spouses social security benefits. The defense department came out Wednesday saying not only will it extend health care, housing and other benefits to same-sex couples, but it will start burying same sex spouses together at Arlington National Cemetery. While groundbreaking for gay couples in states that recognize their marriage, local analysts describe the move as incremental. "The Supreme Court stopped short of recognizing a constitutional right to same sex marriage, so that it still resides with states to make that determination for themselves as to whether they want to recognize a same sex marriage or not," Hays tells us. "How aggressively for example will the Obama administration go about rewriting some of those tax codes, how aggressively will they go about changing immigration policy, those kinds of things remain to be seen," he adds. Gwen Wright and her partner of over 20 years are set to jump the broom in July. A strategically planned date after the Supreme Court's decision. "We were really relieved and delighted with the decision, our hopes were that it would be a favorable one and so we're glad that it did happen and that we're going to get married we get both state and federal recognition," Wright tells us. That recognition from the federal government means an array of benefits, something especially important for Gwen and her partner. "As someone who carried their partner on their health insurance here in New York. The value of that is taxed by the federal government, and so that will be a huge savings for us," she adds. For people at the Pride Center in Albany, a victory. "The federal government doesn't recognize their state tax filing, and for my partner and I, we've had to file two different taxes because the state recognizes that we are married, and the federal government does not recognize," Executive Director Curran Streete tells us. Not to mention social security benefits, which until now have made life hard for same sex couples looking to grow old together. "So because that's a majority of older people's income is their social security or their spouses social security, they would be impoverished with the death of their partner," Streete says.