

ASSEMBLY, No. 818

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

213th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2008 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman REED GUSCIORA

District 15 (Mercer)

Assemblywoman VALERIE VAINIERI HUTTLE

District 37 (Bergen)

Assemblyman JOHN F. MCKEON

District 27 (Essex)

Assemblyman GORDON M. JOHNSON

District 37 (Bergen)

Assemblywoman MILA M. JASEY

District 27 (Essex)

Co-Sponsored by:

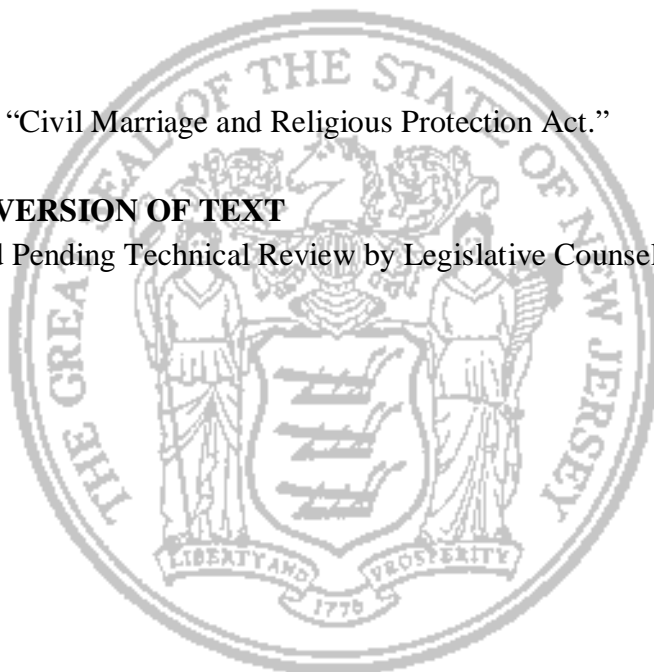
Assemblywoman Wagner

SYNOPSIS

Enacts the “Civil Marriage and Religious Protection Act.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 2/8/2008)

A818 GUSCIORA, VAINIERI HUTTLE

2

1 AN ACT concerning a legally recognized union of two consenting
2 persons, amending R.S.37:1-1 and R.S.37:1-3 and supplementing
3 Title 37 of the Revised Statutes.

4

5 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
6 of New Jersey:

7

8 1. (New section) This act shall be known and may be cited as
9 the “Civil Marriage and Religious Protection Act.”

10

11 2. (New section) It is the intent of the Legislature that this act
12 be interpreted consistently with the guarantees of the First
13 Amendment to the United States Constitution and of Article I,
14 paragraph 4 of the New Jersey Constitution.

15

16 3. (New section) The Legislature finds and declares that:

17 a. Civil marriage is a legal institution recognized by the State in
18 order to promote stable relationships and to protect individuals who
19 are in those relationships. The institution of marriage also provides
20 important protections for the families of those who are married,
21 including not only any children or other dependents, but also
22 members of their extended families.

23 b. On October 25, 2006, the New Jersey Supreme Court held
24 that denying rights and benefits to any committed couples that are
25 statutorily given to others violates the equal protection guarantee of
26 Article I, paragraph 1 of the New Jersey Constitution. The court
27 held that to comply with this constitutional mandate, the Legislature
28 must either amend the marriage statutes to include those couples or
29 create a parallel statutory structure which will provide, on equal
30 terms, the rights and benefits enjoyed and burdens and obligations
31 borne by married couples.

32 c. The exclusion of couples from marriage harms those couples
33 and their families by denying them and their families specific legal
34 rights and responsibilities under State law and by depriving them of
35 a legal basis to challenge federal laws that deny access to the many
36 important federal benefits and obligations provided only to spouses.
37 Those federal benefits include the right to file joint federal income
38 tax returns, the right to sponsor a partner for immigration to the
39 United States, the right to Social Security survivor’s benefits, the
40 right to family and medical leave and many other substantial
41 benefits and obligations.

42 d. New Jersey’s discriminatory exclusion of certain couples
43 from marriage further harms those couples and their families by
44 denying them unique public recognition and affirmation.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 e. The Legislature has an interest in encouraging stable
2 relationships.

3 f. It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this bill to end the
4 pernicious practice of marriage discrimination in New Jersey.

5
6 4. (New section) "Marriage" means the legally recognized union
7 of two consenting persons in a committed relationship. Whenever
8 the term "marriage" occurs or the term "man," "woman," "husband"
9 or "wife" occurs in the context of marriage or any reference is made
10 thereto in any law, statute, rule, regulation or order, the same shall
11 be deemed to mean or refer to the union of two persons pursuant to
12 this amendatory and supplementary act.

13
14 5. R.S.37:1-1 is amended to read as follows:

15 37:1-1. Certain marriages prohibited.

16 A man shall not marry any of his ancestors or descendants, or his
17 sister or brother, or the daughter or son of his brother or sister, or
18 the sister or brother of his father or mother, whether such collateral
19 kindred be of the whole or half blood. A woman shall not marry
20 any of her ancestors or descendants, or her brother or sister, or the
21 son or daughter of her brother or sister, or the brother or sister of
22 her father or mother, whether such collateral kindred be of the
23 whole or half blood. A marriage in violation of any of the foregoing
24 provisions shall be absolutely void.

25 (cf: R.S.37:1-1)

26
27 6. R.S.37:1-3 is amended to read as follows:

28 37:1-3. Where license to be obtained.

29 The licensing officer shall issue the license which shall be
30 obtained:

31 a. In the municipality of this state in which **[the female]** either
32 party to the proposed marriage resides; or

33 b. In the municipality in which **[the male party]** one of the
34 parties resides, if the **[female]** other party is a nonresident of this
35 state; or

36 c. In the municipality in which the proposed marriage is to be
37 performed, if both parties are nonresidents of this state.

38 (cf: R.S.37:1-3)

39
40 7. (New section) In addition to the fee for issuing a marriage
41 license authorized pursuant to R.S.37:1-12 and the fee for the
42 Department of Human Services trust fund authorized pursuant to
43 P.L.1981, c.382 (C.37:1-12.1 and C.37:1-12.2), each licensing
44 officer shall collect a fee of \$50 from the applicants which shall be
45 deposited into the General Fund.

1 responsibilities under State law and by depriving them of a legal
2 basis to challenge federal laws that deny access to the many
3 important federal benefits and obligations provided only to spouses.
4 Those federal benefits include the right to file joint federal income
5 tax returns, the right to sponsor a partner for immigration to the
6 United States, the right to Social Security survivor's benefits, the
7 right to family and medical leave and many other substantial
8 benefits and obligations.

9 The findings and declarations also provide that the Legislature
10 has an interest in encouraging stable relationships.

11 Under the bill, "marriage" would be defined as the legally
12 recognized union of two consenting persons in a committed
13 relationship. The bill provides that whenever the term "marriage"
14 occurs or the term "man," "woman," "husband" or "wife" occurs in
15 the context of marriage or any reference is made thereto in any law,
16 statute, rule, regulation or order, the same shall be deemed to mean
17 or refer to the union of two persons pursuant to the bill.

18 The bill also adds an additional marriage license fee of \$50 for
19 all applicants for marriage. These funds would be deposited in the
20 State General Fund.

21 The bill specifically provides that no minister of any religion
22 authorized to solemnize marriage and no religious society,
23 institution or organization in this State would be required to
24 solemnize any marriage in violation of the free exercise of religion
25 guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States
26 Constitution or by Article I, paragraph 4 of the New Jersey
27 Constitution.