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## SAME-SEX UNIONS

# Perry signs Defense of Marriage Act

### Associated Press

AUSTIN -- Same-sex marriages or civil unions will not be recognized in Texas under legislation that Gov. Rick Perry signed Tuesday.

With the new law, known as the Defense of Marriage Act, Texas will be prevented from legally recognizing same-sex unions that are formed in other states. Already, Texas only permits marriage between a man and a woman.

Critics say the bill was unnecessary and represents a right-wing agenda of intolerance.

"It's about politics. It's about scapegoating gays and lesbians," said Randall Ellis, executive director of the Lesbian Gay Rights Lobby of Texas.

Existing statutes specify that, in Texas, this state's laws apply even to marriages performed in other states, Ellis said.

But supporters said the act was needed to protect Texas from the legal decisions of judges in other states where same-sex unions could be recognized.

"What this does, it protects your state from having a different definition forced on you from another state," said Kelly Shackelford, president of the Plano-based Free Market Foundation, a group that describes itself as dedicated to strengthening families.

Perry signed the measure in a private meeting in his Capitol office, where he was joined by backers of the bill. News reporters were not allowed to attend.

"Like the vast majority of Texans, I believe that marriage represents a sacred union between a man and a woman. With passage of the Defense of Marriage Act, Texas now joins more than 30 states in reinforcing that basic belief," Perry said in a prepared statement afterward.

Texas becomes the 37th state to enact such a law, Shackelford said.

The bill faced some unsuccessful Democratic opposition in the Texas Senate. It received widespread

support in a record vote in the House. Senate Bill 7 was authored by Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio, and sponsored by Rep. Warren Chisum, R-Pampa.

"I look at it as more of a legal matter where Texas claims its right to set its own policy in that important area of family law. It defends and protects the institution of marriage that candidly has been under attack the last 25 years," Wentworth said.

The law won't stop couples of the same sex from living together nor will it deny same-sex couples the right to bequeath property or enter into powers of attorney, Wentworth said.



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