



AFTER 5 YEARS OF EXTENDING MARRIAGE TO GAY COUPLES, NEW STUDIES SHOW MASSACHUSETTS HAS ATTRACTED HIGHLY-SKILLED WORKERS AND EXPERIENCED ECONOMIC BOOST OF OVER \$100 MILLION

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Media Contact:

Cathy Renna 917.757.6123 cathy@rennacomunications.com

Gary Gates 310.825.1868 (v) or 202.257.6400 (c)

Lee Badgett 413-545-3162 (v) or 310-904-9761 (c)

On the eve of the fifth anniversary of same-sex couples marrying in Massachusetts, two new studies released today by UCLA's Williams Institute show clear economic gains for Massachusetts that have resulted from marriage equality. Massachusetts gained a competitive edge in attracting young, highly educated "creative class" professionals who are in same-sex couples, according to one study. The second study confirms that the weddings of same-sex couples have given a significant boost to the state's economy.

Earlier studies predicted that state economies would gain in several ways from allowing gay couples to marry. Economic development expert Richard Florida argued that policies promoting tolerance and equality would be a welcome mat for highly mobile creative class members whose creative energy drives economic growth. Other studies have predicted a wedding windfall for many businesses as same-sex couples and their guests spend money on weddings, gifts, and tourism. However, until today, no one had tested whether those predictions have actually happened.

"Data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey show that same-sex couples in the 'creative class' were 2.5 times more likely to move to Massachusetts after 2004 than before," notes Gary J. Gates, Williams Distinguished Scholar at UCLA's Williams Institute and the author of one study. "The timing of this movement to Massachusetts suggests that those couples were flocking to the first state to allow them to marry."

Gates argues that this infusion of younger and highly educated same-sex couples could help improve the long-term economic prospects for Massachusetts.

As states struggle with the current downturn in the economy, marriage equality has also given a boost to businesses, according to the second study. A new survey of married same-sex couples shows that the typical gay or lesbian couple spent \$7,400 on their weddings in Massachusetts, with one in ten couples spending more than \$20,000. The study's analysis of state data on hotel occupancy tax payments confirms the boost from out-of-state guests at these weddings.

"Florists, caterers, hotels, bakers, restaurants, and many other businesses have gotten a share of the \$111 million spent on the 12,000-plus weddings of same-sex couples," notes economist M. V. Lee Badgett, a study co-author and director of the Center for Public Policy & Administration at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. "Allowing gay couples to marry won't end the recession, but their spending still helps in tough times for businesses."

The findings of these two studies confirm the predictions made in previous studies. They also indicate that other states allowing gay couples to marry-including Connecticut, Iowa, Vermont, and Maine-will see similar economic gains.

The Williams Institute for Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy advances law and public policy through rigorous, independent research and scholarship, and disseminates its work through a variety of education programs and media to judges, legislators, lawyers, other policymakers and the public. These studies can be accessed at the Williams Institute website, www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute.

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