

**Letters continued from page eight**

a set of research questions based not only on the unique opportunities offered by civil union Legislation but also on our community members' interests and concerns regarding the impact of civil union on partner relationships and families.

So we want to ask the readers of *OITM*: If you had the opportunity to survey LGBT individuals, couples, and families around the state about how these are being affected by civil union law, what would you want to know? We will draw on your responses to help us develop an initial research agenda aimed at informing our community of the various ways civil union legislation is affecting our lives and relationships.

Write us c/o *OITM* or email us at [jsweinst@zoo.uvm.edu](mailto:jsweinst@zoo.uvm.edu) or [dfelicio@zoo.uvm.edu](mailto:dfelicio@zoo.uvm.edu). You may write us anonymously if you wish. However, if you choose to include your name and/or other identifying information we will not disclose this information in any future reports or research.

Thanks and we look forward to hearing from you.

Jackie Weinstock & Diane Felicio

**Maryland Thanks**

Thank you Governor Dean. Thank you Marina Collins, J.P. Thank you Vermont!

When I heard that there was a State Supreme Court saying that gay Americans deserve the same rights of association as their non-gay kin, I thought "Yea!" When I heard it was Vermont, I thought, "Vermont?! Oh no, not 'Maple Syrup' Vermont!"

Well, after researching the Internet, we decided to stay in Burlington, overlooking beautiful Lake Champlain. We visited Barre's quarries and cemeteries, Shelburne's marvelous museum and took our picture on the grand steps of the State House and in front of the more modest facade of the State

Supreme Court building in Montpelier.

We walked and walked and drank coffee and enjoyed the work of the students of the NECL. Vermont is beautiful and we will be encouraging all of our family, friends and colleagues to visit and spend their vacation dollars in your fair state.

Thank you again Vermont. You did the right thing for the right reasons. May you be blessed with prosperity in return.

Kate and Kim Meeks-Hall  
Baltimore, Maryland

**Keeping Promises**

Christopher Kaufman's thoughtful letter to the editor last month concerning Vermonters for Civil Unions raises an important issue.

In particular, Mr. Kaufman chides the newly formed political action committee for supporting Governor Dean. We should be clear about what VCU is and is not. We do not purport to be a multi-issue organization concerned with all aspects of social justice, or even gay rights. Rather, we were formed for the narrow and specific purpose of protecting Vermont's civil union law by (1) supporting incumbent candidates who voted for the law, (2) backing challengers to incumbents who voted against the law, and (3) working for pro civil union candidates who are running for open seats. Our

primary focus, by far, is and will be the Vermont legislature.

This spring, when it became clear that our legislature was unwilling to include same-sex couples in the marriage laws, the freedom to marry community in Vermont struggled with a very difficult decision. Should we fight against the civil union law because it stops short of full equality, or should we support the law and continue to work for full equality? The activists at the core of the freedom to marry movement, who struggled with the question, ultimately concluded that we should support the civil union law as a compromise measure, despite its shortcomings. For one, the law purports to recognize gay and lesbian relationships as *equal* – an important acknowledgment to all of us. Moreover, we decided that to fight against such an important set of legal protections for gay and lesbian couples and their families because they didn't go far enough, would be unwise and unfair to the many couples who could benefit from the legal protections the law provides them.

Having made that difficult decision, we then had to commit ourselves to doing everything we could to promote the passage of that law. We mobilized our grassroots, told our stories, and assured our supporters, and those on the fence, that we would be there for them in November. We *didn't* say, "We will be there for you

in November, unless somebody else who we like better comes along." (If we had, we may well not have a civil union law today.)

They were there for us, and now it's our turn to live up to our own promises. That means that, first and foremost, VCU will back every member of the legislature who voted for the civil union law, as well as the Governor and Lieutenant Governor who made it happen.

We fully understand that when considering a broad range of issues, some freedom to marry supporters will choose to support candidates other than those backed by VCU. That's fine. We may agree on 95 percent of the candidates and disagree about five percent. We do urge folks, however, to be mindful of the assur-

ances that many of us as a community made to legislators through the legislative session.

In the meantime, the attacks on the entire gay and lesbian community have intensified. Whatever you do, *please* get involved. Volunteer for your favorite candidates; join VCU; send money to VCU and supportive candidates; most important, VOTE! Our survival depends on it.

Beth Robinson

*Beth Robinson is a member of the legal team who represented the plaintiffs in Baker v Vermont and Secretary of Vermonters for Civil Unions.*

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**Our Mission**

The Samara Foundation of Vermont is a charitable foundation whose mission is to support and strengthen Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities today and build an endowment for tomorrow.

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