

JAMES H. DOUGLAS  
Governor



State of Vermont  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

April 6, 2009

The Honorable David A. Gibson  
Secretary of the Senate  
State House  
115 State Street, Drawer 33  
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Pursuant to Chapter II, Section 11 of the Vermont Constitution, I am returning S.115, *An Act Relating to Civil Marriage*, without my signature because of my objections described herein. I do so recognizing that this is an issue that is intensely personal, with strongly held beliefs and convictions on both sides. But I am charged by our Constitution to act on this legislation and by its return, I have fulfilled that responsibility.

The question of same sex marriage is an issue that does not break cleanly as Republican or Democrat, rural or urban, religious or atheist. The decision to support or oppose is informed by an amalgam of experience, conviction and faith. These beliefs are deeply held, passionately expressed and, for many legislators, infinitely more complex than the ultimate 'yea' or 'nay' required to fulfill the duty of their office.

On such an intensely personal issue as this, all members must do as their individual conscience dictates, with the best interest of their districts in mind. It is for those reasons that I have not sought to lobby members of my own party, or asked opponents to sustain my veto.

This legislation does not address the inequalities espoused by proponents. Regardless of whether the term marriage is applied, federal benefits will still be denied to same sex couples in Vermont. And states that do not recognize same sex marriage or civil unions will also deny state rights and responsibilities to same sex couples married in Vermont. This bill will not change that fact.

Vermont's civil union law has afforded the same state rights, responsibilities and benefits of marriage to same sex couples. Our civil union law serves Vermont well and I would support congressional action to extend those benefits at the federal level to states that recognize same sex unions. But I believe that marriage should remain between a man and a woman.

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I hope that when the legislature makes its final decision, we can move our state forward, toward a bright future for our children and grandchildren. We still have a great deal of work ahead of us to balance our budget and get our economy going again and Vermonters are counting on us to work together to get the job done.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James H. Douglas", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James H. Douglas  
Governor

JHD/pdc

## **Governor's Veto Overridden**

### **S. 115, 2009**

The Governor's Veto was overridden in the Senate:

**Yeas: 23 Nays: 5**

The Governor's Veto was overridden in the House:

**Yeas: 100 Nays: 49**

\*Note: The veto is overridden by two-thirds majority in both the House and Senate.

Sources: *Journal of the Senate*, April 7, 2009 [page 656 - 657 (online)];  
*Journal of the House*, April 7, 2009 [ page 605 - 607 (online)].