



ericGARCETTI

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL

District 13 ? 200 N. Spring St. Room 470 ? Los Angeles ? CA 90012



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 12, 2004

Contact: Josh Kamensky (213) 473-7013

GARCETTI URGES SUPPORT FOR GLBT IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

Resolution Urges Congress to Extend Immigration Benefits to U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents in Committed Same-Sex Relationships

Councilmember Eric Garcetti today introduced a City Council resolution urging Congress to adopt the Permanent Partners Immigration Act of 2003 (PPIA) currently pending in Congress. The PPIA would amend the Immigration and Naturalization Act to extend immigration benefits to US citizens and permanent US residents in committed same-sex relationships who seek to sponsor their foreign-born partners.

"Because of inequalities in our immigration laws, gay men and lesbians in committed relationships are separated and treated as second-class citizens," said Councilmember Eric Garcetti. "The Permanent Partners Immigration Act would provide same-sex couples with the immigration rights currently enjoyed by married couples."

"We applaud Councilmember Eric Garcetti for leading the fight to ensure that federal law protects all families instead of tearing them apart," said Ramona Ripston, executive director of the ACLU of Southern California.

United States immigration law is largely based on the principle of "family unification," allowing citizens and legal permanent residents to sponsor spouses and family members for immigration to the United States. Yet, thousands of couples live under the constant threat of the foreign partner's deportation or face the eventuality of having their families torn apart when US-issued visas expire.

"Unfortunately for same-sex couples, 'family separation' better describes the effect of current U.S. immigration laws on lesbian and gay families," said Ripston.

"The United States is lagging behind 16 other countries that recognize same-sex couples for immigration purposes," says Doug Haxall, Board Member, Immigration Equality / LA. Those countries are: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Israel, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

"Los Angeles is a globalized, tolerant world city," said Councilmember Garcetti. "Along with the State of California, we have passed numerous laws protecting the rights of same-sex partners and legally recognizing their unions in the form of legally recognized domestic partnerships. But these protections are meaningless for couples who are torn apart by current immigration laws."

The PPIA was first introduced by Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) in February of 2000, and garnered nearly 60 cosponsors in its first year. It currently has 122 cosponsors in the House of Representatives (29 from California), and 12 in the Senate.

The Los Angeles resolution is backed by Immigration Equality/LA, an organization dedicated to securing equal immigration rights for bi-national, same-sex partners; the ACLU of Southern California; and the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA).

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