

## **TIMELINE: EVENTS THAT SHAPED LEGALIZATION OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND LGBTQ RIGHTS IN AMERICAN CULTURE**

- 1951 First National Gay Rights Organization is founded.
- 1952 Political campaign advertising on TV is used for the first time by the Republican candidate for president, Dwight D. Eisenhower.
- 1961 Illinois Sodomy Law is repealed.
- 1966 Feminist group National Organization for Women (NOW) is formed.
- 1969 Gay rights movement begins with Stonewall riots in New York City.
- 1970 A same-sex couple (Richard Baker and James McConnell) apply to Minnesota District Court clerk Gerald Nelson for a marriage license. They are denied and the case goes to the state Supreme Court. They rule that a state law limiting marriage to persons of the opposite sex did not violate the U.S. Constitution. Baker-McConnell appeal and the U.S. Supreme Court dismisses the appeal. In 2013, Minnesota legalizes same-sex marriage. Subsequently, in 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court overrules Baker in Obergefell v. Hodges, making same-sex marriage legal nationwide.
- 1971 National Organization of Women (NOW) expands its policies to include lesbian rights.
- 1973 Maryland becomes the first state to ban same-sex marriage.
- 1974 First openly gay elected for State Office  
Kathy Kozachenko wins a seat to the Ann Arbor, Michigan City Council becoming the first openly gay American to be elected to public office.
- 1976 Family Life, a division of Campus Crusade for Christ, founded by Dennis Rainey as a ministry that offers families blueprints for living godly lives.
- 1977 Focus on the Family founded as a radio program in Arcadia, CA, by the American evangelical Christian and psychologist James Dobson.  
The New York Supreme Court rules that transgender woman Renée Richards can play at the United States Open tennis tournament as a woman.
- 1978 Harvey Milk becomes the San Francisco city supervisor and the first openly gay man elected to a political office in California.

- 1979 Moral Majority founded by Jerry Falwell to advance conservative social values. It opposed abortion, the ERA, and gay rights.
- 1980 Democratic National Convention supports gay rights.
- 1983 Spousal rights of same-sex couples becomes an issue when Karen Thompson's eight-year struggle for legal guardianship of her lover Sharon Kowalski, in a coma for several months after an auto collision leaves her quadriplegic and severely brain-damaged. Despite Sharon's wishes to be cared for by Karen, Sharon's parents refused Karen full access or input into her care.
- Family Research Council (FRC) founded in Washington, D.C. as an organization dedicated to the promotion of marriage and family and the sanctity of human life in national policy.
- 1984 City of Berkeley adopts first Same-Sex Domestic Partnerships Ordinance.
- Researchers identify the cause of AIDS—the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV.
- 1985 The Food and Drug Administration licenses the first commercial blood test for HIV in 1985.
- 1987 Nearly 2000 same-sex wedding marriages occur on the National Mall.
- The first antiretroviral medication for HIV, azidothymidine (AZT), becomes available.
- Gay rights proponents conduct the second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.
- 1989 Court rulings in NY and CA define same-sex couples as families.
- 1991 First lesbian kiss in episode of *L.A. Law* showing two women kissing.
- 1992 Same-sex employees begin to receive domestic partner benefits from Levi Strauss & Co. and the state of Massachusetts.
- 1993 “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” law signed by President Clinton.
- Hawaii Supreme Court rules the state cannot deny same-sex couples the right to marry unless it finds “a compelling reason” to do so and orders the issue back to the state legislature. Hawaii lawmakers pass amendment banning gay marriages.
- Ellen DeGeneres appears on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and comes out as a lesbian. The coming-out episode of *Ellen* airs later.

- 1994 An Ikea ad runs on TV showing two men shopping for furniture together. This is the first TV commercial featuring a gay couple.  
During an episode titled “*Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell*” of the popular sitcom *Roseanne*, Mariel Hemingway kisses Roseanne Barr.
- 1995 Utah governor signs a state Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) statute into law that defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman.  
National Organization of Women (NOW) “comes out” in favor of same-sex marriage rights.
- 1996 Clinton signs the federal DOMA.
- 1997 Hawaii becomes the first state to offer domestic partnership benefits to same-sex couples.
- 1998 President Bill Clinton Signs Executive Order 13087 banning the federal government from discriminating based on sexual orientation in employment.  
Voters in Alaska and Hawaii approve a same-sex marriage ballot initiative.
- 1999 California adopts a statewide Domestic Partnerships Ordinance.
- 2000 U.S. Supreme Court rules that the Boy Scouts of America have a constitutional right to bar membership to gay individuals because opposition to homosexuality is part of their “expressive message.”  
Vermont adopts nation's first Civil Unions Policy.  
The Central Conference of American Rabbis agrees to allow religious ceremonies for same-sex couples.  
First passionate same-sex kiss on television’s *Dawson’s Creek* when characters Jack McPhee (Kerr Smith) and Ethan (Adam Kaufmann) shared the first ever on-screen homosexual kiss in the season finale.
- 2002 Nevada votes to approve a state constitutional ban on same-sex marriage.
- 2003 The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Lawrence v. Texas*, strikes down the state’s anti-sodomy law effectively decriminalizing homosexual relations nationwide.
- 2004 Massachusetts becomes first state to legalize same-sex marriage in state Supreme Court ruling in *Goodridge v. Department of Health*.

New Mexico begins issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples as their law does not mention gender.

Portland, Oregon begins issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

Missouri votes to ban same-sex marriage.

Washington state says yes to same-sex marriage in a court decision while the California Supreme Court voids same-sex marriages. Several states pass initiatives to ban same-sex marriages.

2005 In New York, a state judge calls the state ban on same-sex marriage illegal.

California's legislature attempts to pass a law legalizing same-sex unions but it is vetoed by the governor.

Connecticut becomes the second state to approve same-sex unions.

*Brokeback Mountain*, a major motion picture is released, starring Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal as two cowboys in a gay relationship.

2006 The New Jersey Supreme Court orders the legislature to recognize same-sex unions.

2008 California's Supreme Court overturns the ban on gay marriage. This leads to California voters approving a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage known as Proposition 8. Florida and Arizona voters do the same.

2009 The Iowa Supreme Court overturns the state ban on same-sex marriage. Vermont's legislature legalizes same-sex marriages. Maine and New Hampshire follow suit, though Maine voters later repeal the state law allowing same-sex marriage.

2010 US District Judge Rules CA Proposition 8 Unconstitutional.

2011 President Obama declares DOMA unconstitutional. New York legalizes same-sex marriage.

2012 US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals Rules CA Proposition 8 unconstitutional.

Fred S. Karger political consultant, gay rights activist, former actor, and politician makes an unsuccessful run for the Republican nomination for the 2012 U.S. Presidential election making him the

first openly gay presidential candidate in a major political party in American history.

- 2013 The Boy Scouts of America ends its ban on openly gay youths.
- Supreme Court strikes down DOMA that banned federal recognition of same sex marriage and refuses to recognize California Proposition 8 that banned same-sex marriage in California.
- Rhode Island, Delaware, Minnesota, New Jersey, Hawaii, Illinois, and New Mexico legalize same-sex marriage.
- US Military extends some marriage benefits to same-sex partners.
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS) recognizes married same-sex couples.
- 2014 Oregon, Pennsylvania, Kansas, and South Carolina legalize same-sex marriage.
- The Presbyterian church votes to allow same-sex ceremonies.
- The U.S. Supreme Court decides a case that allows for same-sex marriage in 5 states (VA, OK, UT, WI, and IN) but declines to make a blanket statement for all states.
- 2015 The Boy Scouts of America ends its ban on openly gay adult leaders.
- Same-sex marriage legalized in all 50 US states after Supreme Court ruling in Obergefell v. Hodges. By 2015, 70 percent of states and the District of Columbia had already recognized same-sex marriage.
- Obergefell v. Hodges officially overturned remaining state laws that banned same-sex marriage. In ruling that marriage is a fundamental right and extending equal protection to same-sex couples, the Supreme Court created a formal obligation for states to respect the institution of marriage as a voluntary union. As a result of Obergefell v. Hodges, same-sex couples are entitled to the same benefits as opposite-sex couples including spousal benefits, inheritance rights, and emergency medical decision-making power.
- Episcopal Church votes to allow same-sex weddings days after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized gay marriage nationwide.
- 2017 The Boy Scouts of America begins accepting members based on the gender listed on their application allowing transgender boys to join.
- 2018 A divided Supreme Court absolves a Colorado baker of discrimination for refusing to create a custom wedding cake for a same-sex couple.

2019

Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Indiana, becomes the first openly gay candidate in the 2020 presidential race in an already crowded field of Democratic hopefuls.