



Heterosexual Seniors and Domestic Partnerships

The Domestic Partnership Law was passed by the Legislature to ensure that all Washington families are treated the same, with the same protections, the same rights and the same responsibilities as their neighbors. Domestic partnerships are available to opposite-sex couples where one or both partners is age 62 or older, and to same-sex couples. Domestic partnerships help ensure that all families are treated equally under state law.

Why do seniors need the protection of domestic partnerships?

Often seniors who are widowed or divorced will suffer serious economic hardship if they re-marry. Under Social Security, there is a 'marriage penalty' where seniors' benefits are put in peril if they re-marry. For example, women who spent their working years as homemakers or in traditionally lower wage jobs often have to rely on a former spouse's work history to receive Social Security benefits because benefits are generally based on 30 years of paid work experience. But if a senior re-marries after a divorce, she will no longer be able to rely on her former spouse's work history to receive Social Security benefits. Once stripped of her Social Security benefits, she would face poverty and be forced to work well into her senior years to provide for her basic needs. Many seniors would also have to pay additional taxes on their Social Security benefits if they re-marry. Some elders end up sacrificing hard-earned health care, military or pension benefits if they re-marry. The domestic partnership law allows unmarried senior couples to have the legal protections they need, take care of each other, be able to provide insurance or take family or medical leave if a partner is gravely ill, and make critical decisions for one another in times of crisis, without losing benefits that for many may be their only source of income. They should not have to live in poverty in order to be together with the person they love.

Who supports domestic partnerships for seniors?

The domestic partnership law is widely supported by Washington organizations and agencies dedicated to serving our seniors. The Washington State Senior Citizen Lobby, which represents 26 agencies and organizations that focus mainly on seniors' issues, has joined forces with Senior Services, Advisory Council on Aging and Disability Services Seattle/King County, Puget Sound Alliance for Retired Americans and over 175 other organizations to help preserve the domestic partnership law.

By voting to Approve Referendum 71, you will vote to ensure that all families are treated fairly, especially in times of crisis.

PROTECT ALL FAMILIES EQUALLY UNDER THE LAW
Vote Approve on Referendum 71

www.approve71.org 206-324-2570 PO Box 12216, Seattle, WA 98102
Paid for by Washington Families Standing Together – Printed in House