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Introducing Wisconsin's Premiere LGBT News Leader

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# A Nationwide Assault on State Constitutions Is Wisconsin Next?

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR  
by Don Hoffman

**Hello and welcome to Q Life!**  
I would like to be able to give you a formal invitation to meet my newborn child – but like all forming beings, this paper is ever-changing. So to fall right into the holiday spirit and take a trick from the big guy in red, I'll give just a wink and a nod and leave our firm handshake to a few months from now.

That being said, what I can tell you immediately is that I hope you spend a few minutes looking over our premiere edition and find what I think is clearly here – a heck of a lot of different topics covered by folks with completely different voices. Go through and count for yourself. There are 19 writers in all, each one with his or her own opinion and writing style. I have done my best to make sure their stories are straightforward and clear, but have made a conscious decision not to alter or change greatly these writers bring to Q Life. I truly believe that this will be one of the greatest strengths of our paper – diversity in all aspects.

As you read through the following pages, you might ask yourself why are there are so many different topics? That answer is an easy one because – like the rest of the world – the LGBT community is made up of smart people looking for information they can use and will find interesting. While I agree these types of columns are not traditionally found in most gay newspapers, it is high time we change that. You will also

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by Sara Faraj

**G**ay Marriage. Recently, these two words have been used to draw bloody battle lines between two increasingly vocal groups – radical fundamentalists and those who favor civil rights for all people.

This fight has already been waged at the ballot box in more than 11 states. The proposed amendment to Wisconsin's constitution, which would ban marriage between same-sex partners and most likely outlaw civil unions and domestic partnerships, is likely on the horizon.

To add fuel to the fire, State Representative Mark Pocan (D-Madison) questions the motives of a third group – legislators who are using the amendment as a political maneuvering tool to secure more votes in critical elections.

In Wisconsin, the proposed amendment has already passed through both houses of the legislature

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in November 2006, when Governor Doyle and other key Democrats are up for re-election.

Pocan draws similarities between this and Karl Rove's strategy on a nationwide level to use gay marriage as a voter turnout tool. Rove was the mastermind and strategist behind President Bush's recent re-election campaign. "Is this really about people who think marriage needs to be protected or is it about people who see this as a great tool to bring out certain types of voters?" asks Pocan.

### Appealing to Bigotry

Chris Ott, the Executive Director of Action Wisconsin, a statewide LGBT

civil rights organization, believes that at its most basic this amendment is about hostility to LGBT people.

"The backers of the amendment want people to believe that their intent is to preserve or protect marriage. But what they're really doing is singling out a category of people to write us out of the constitution and deny us some very basic protections for our relationships and families," Ott told Q Life.

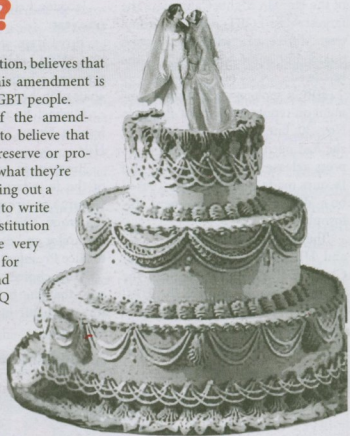
Ott believes the legislature is out of step with public opinion and points out that at the federal level there are over a thousand protections, rights and responsibilities associated with marriage.

Through all of these are already denied to LGBT couples, this proposed amendment would take away even the hope for change. These benefits include the ability to make emergency medical decisions for a partner, bereavement leave, property inheritance, social security survivor benefits and the protections offered through immigration law.

"They're playing politics with people's lives," Ott asserts.

### Is This Just Politics or Is Religion Involved?

It is no secret that in the past, fundamentalists denounced homosexuality based on myths of promiscuity and inability to form committed relationships. Now, in an apparent flip-flop, some of today's rightwing religious leaders condemn couples in the LGBT community for wanting partnership stability.



### Wisconsin's anti-gay marriage amendment may have far-reaching consequences.

Below is the actual text.

"Only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in this state. A legal status identical or substantially similar to that of marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized in this state."

There's some debate about who will be affected if this amendment were to pass. Mike Prentiss, a spokesperson for Senator Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) says, "Our interpretation of the wording is that it does not prohibit future legislatures, if they decide to try to pass something like civil unions, from doing so."

However, that interpretation couldn't be further from the truth according to Patrick Flaherty, of the LGBT Center Advocates. Flaherty says it will ban not only

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