

## “D.C. issues first gay-marriage licenses”

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The District of Columbia on Wednesday began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples, following a last-minute U.S. Supreme Court decision not to address the issue.

The District now becomes the sixth jurisdiction in the United States to issue such licenses to same-sex couples — joining Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. Weddings cannot be performed in Washington until Tuesday because of a mandatory waiting period.

“Our mood is absolute jubilation,” Darlene Garner said outside the Moultrie Courthouse, blocks from the Capitol and the White House. She and partner Candy Holmes were among the first in line to apply for a license.

“The accomplishment of today is that finally I'm able to marry the love of my life,” added Ms. Garner, who plans to wed Tuesday.

The 13-member D.C. Council voted in December in favor of the Marriage Equality Act.

Opponents of same-sex marriages have tried several ways to stop the legislation, including the appeal to the Supreme Court for a temporary injunction. They said D.C. residents should vote on the legislation, not the council.

Late Tuesday, Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. issue what the high court calls an “in chambers opinion” — a measure to address eleventh-hour requests that are written by the justice who presides over the courts from which the case started.

He said voters will have the right to challenge the legislation in D.C. courts and pointed out that Congress, which has oversight of the District, declined to stop the law from taking effect.

“This argument has some force,” Justice Roberts wrote in the three-page opinion regarding the case Jackson v. District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics. “However, I conclude that a stay is not warranted. ... It has been the practice of the court to defer to the decisions of the courts of the District of Columbia on matters of exclusively local concerns.”

The D.C. Court of Appeals last week unanimously rejected the case.

The judges' one-page opinion provided only the legal basis for their decision: that a temporary injunction is granted only when the plaintiff likely would win the case or when allowing something to go forward would bring harm to the plaintiff.

Republicans in Congress have said they lacked the votes to oppose the legislation successfully.

D.C. churches are exempt from having to perform same-sex wedding ceremonies. But the bill does not have the support of the Catholic Archdiocese of Washington, which has concerns about the cost of Catholic Charities having to extend services to spouses in same-sex marriages.

Same-sex marriage was approved last year in California, but the law later was struck down by a voter referendum.

The D.C. vote was 11-2, with the council's two openly gay members — David A. Catania, at-large independent, and Jim Graham, Ward 1 Democrat — voting yes.

Council members Marion Barry, Ward 8 Democrat, and Yvette Alexander, Ward 7 Democrat, voted no. Mayor Adrian M. Fenty, a Democrat, promptly signed the bill.