

## **DOMA challenge comes at bad time**

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As a native and resident of North Carolina, a just-turned-slightly-blue, politically precarious state, I read with trepidation the news of Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders' (GLAD) federal challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).

While part of me is ecstatic that our movement is going forward, the cautious (and, perhaps, scared) side of me holds back. What does GLAD's challenge to DOMA mean for states like North Carolina?

I'm afraid our national LGBT community is repeating the same reckless mistakes over and over again. In the mid-1990s, Hawaii's move toward civil unions prompted a national, anti-gay backlash resulting in a federal DOMA and similar statutes in the majority of U.S. states. In the early years after the turn of the century, similar strides forward created anti-gay havoc in another majority of states in 2004, 2006 and 2008. The post-2000 backlash was the most painful - unlike statutes, constitutional amendments can't as easily be undone.

States like mine and flyover states like Indiana without anti-gay state constitutional amendments on marriage are, as Tar Heel State blogger Pam Spaulding says, "sitting ducks" in the continued state and local onslaught against LGBT equality.

What might be a positive step forward for liberal states like Massachusetts and Connecticut could turn out to be a huge leap backward for states like mine.

North Carolina remains the only Southern state without an anti-gay state constitutional amendment. A challenge to the federal DOMA gives our already more-than-well-organized, anti-gay opponents all the ammunition they need to ride roughshod over our LGBT citizens and write discrimination into our constitution. It doesn't matter that GLAD is only challenging part of DOMA; the religious right here will make use of the filing and add it to their arsenal of anti-gay propaganda and hate.

**As Massachusetts moves forward, what will organizations like GLAD, and national groups like the Human Rights Campaign and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, do to help the few remaining states where LGBT community members have sweated blood and tears to hold back the tide of anti-gay amendments?**

Will we be left to fight alone? Will we be forgotten? Will we have to wait to be saved by the U.S. Supreme Court some two, three or four decades from now?

As our movement pushes forward, I implore our national leaders and those with GLAD to keep in mind the impact their actions will have on LGBT Americans living in less liberal states, towns and communities.

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