

Tax Day Headaches for Same-sex Couples

Tax day can be a bewildering process, full of anxiety for the average family, but it turns into a hardship when the government treats the family you've built as legal strangers. Such is the case for same-sex couples all across Texas. Because the state and federal governments do not recognize these families with legal unions, individuals in same-sex couples must file separately, and end up paying more while being prohibited from the benefits and protections afforded through marriage.

Excluding same-sex couples from marriage means increased tax burdens for people who are trying to live their lives and do the right thing, including pay their taxes. Married couples can file taxes jointly and be taxed at a lower level, but same-sex couples cannot file taxes jointly and get lower taxes because they are excluded from marriage; same-sex couples also lose out on the ability to collect each other's social security, receive automatic inheritance rights, or transfer property without being taxed because of marriage discrimination.

When the partners of a same-sex couple are financially interdependent, jointly holding property, or are parents, the situation becomes even more complicated. "Because there are parts of the tax code that give incentives for couples to be married, to be raising kids, it ends up being unfair to families who are in the exact same kinds of familial situations but are not recognized by the government," says Allison Little, who, with her partner Heidi Vance, have had the unique experience of filing jointly (under the domestic partnership registry when they resided in California) for state taxes while being forced to file separately on the federal level.

"Heidi and I have been together for six years but are still filing single. We share a house, a cat, a bed, a bank account, jointly owned cars, shared obligations to both my side and her side of the family . . . this is what being in a couple looks like . . . yet the tax code, which is full of provisions that treat couples differently from other people, still looks at us as strangers."

At Atticus Circle, we aim to educate and mobilize fair-minded straight people to advance equal rights for LGBT partners, parents and their children, like Heidi and Alison. Many straight people do not know

- There are 1,138 federal protections, rights, and benefits; hundreds of state and local-level protections; and employer benefits provided through marriage from which same sex couples are currently excluded.
- When it comes to taxes, same-sex committed couples will always pay more, but get less because of discrimination in marriage.

Because of this discrimination, same-sex couples and families have less money - for food, for clothes, and for and other basics. This affects not only same-sex partners, but their children, as well. Same-sex couples are denied many of the financial benefits of being able to marry, creating a smaller economic pool from which families can draw for their basic living needs and inevitably impacting the standard of living of the child.

Contact information of same-sex couple for quotes:

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