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Same-Sex Marriage Advocates Hoping to Overturn Florida's Ban

"Today the majority of Floridians stand with us as we take this historic step toward marriage equality in the Sunshine State," Equality Florida CEO Nadine Smith said. "These couples have been embraced by their families and communities, but every day, Florida laws are denying them the protections and dignity that every family deserves."

Catherina Pareto and Karla Arguello, two of the plaintiffs, have been together for 14 years.

"Florida is our home, it is where we are raising our child, and where we want to get married," Pareto said. "Karla and I wish for our family the

same things that other families want. We want to build our lives together, provide a safe and caring home for our child, and share in the responsibilities and protections of marriage."

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Similar claims have been made in other states, where judges in many cases have struck down gay marriage bans as discriminatory. Florida attorneys said there are lawsuits challenging same-sex marriage bans pending in 40 states.

Florida voters enshrined a ban on same-sex marriage in the state constitution in 2008. Attorneys for the gay couples say they believe public opinion is different now and that judges are increasingly concluding the laws are unconstitutional.

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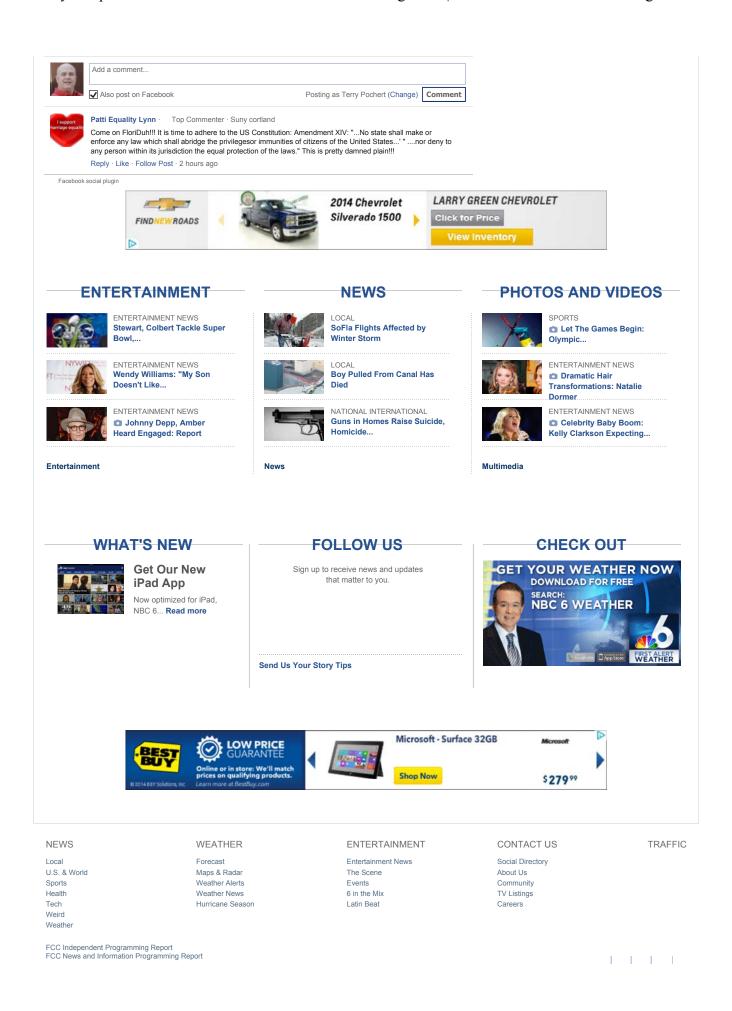
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