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## Arizona Marriage Equality Conversation

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**Sedona AZ (June 12, 2014)** – On Friday, June 27, 2014, a community conversation discusses the role of a fair and impartial judiciary as a Flagstaff couple takes their fight for marriage equality to court. **Arizona Advocacy Network**, a progressive, non-partisan civic engagement organization is hosting the happy hour event, **The Fight for Marriage Equality in Arizona: Taking it to the Courts**.

**Donna Red Wing**, Executive Director of **One Iowa** and **Meagan and Natalie Metz**, Flagstaff, Arizona, residents and plaintiffs in Arizona's marriage equality case, **Connolly v Roche**, will speak along with their attorney, **Shawn Aiken**.

This program is one of many in the **Arizona Fair Courts and Judicial Diversity Project**. Lead by **Arizona Advocacy Network**, **Justice at Stake** and **Arizona Bar Associations**, the goal is to strengthen Arizona's merit selection system and courts with greater citizen involvement and qualified judges from diverse community backgrounds.

"By strengthening Arizona's judicial merit selection system and increasing diversity on the bench, we protect Arizona's fair and impartial courts," said **Sam Wercinski**, Executive Director of **Arizona Advocacy Network**. "In a post Citizen's United environment, the merit system protects our courts from big money influences, which have undermined fair courts in other states."

The courts are a safety net for many seeking justice, like Meagan and Natalie Metz. "As residents of Flagstaff, a community we love, Natalie and I want our marriage to be recognized. We know we can't rely on current Arizona lawmakers to be fair but we have faith in our courts," said Meagan Metz, adding, "There is an absolute need to keep our courts free from the influence of money and partisan attacks, to ensure they stay fair and impartial."

The **Fight for Marriage Equality in Arizona: Taking it to The Courts** is June 27 at 5:30 p.m. at The Inn at 410, 410 North Leroux Street, Flagstaff. The event is free to the public with complimentary food and drinks.

Please RSVP to [AZadvocacy.org](http://AZadvocacy.org) or call 602-297-2500.



Arizona has provided benefits to same-sex partners of state employees since 2008. A 2009 statute made domestic partners of state employees ineligible for health benefits, but a group of state employees in same-sex relationships persuaded a federal District Court to issue an injunction preventing the law from taking effect. The statute and that injunction remain the subject of an ongoing lawsuit, *Diaz v. Brewer*. On June 4, 2013, the Bisbee City Council approved an ordinance legalizing civil unions for same-sex couples; it took effect 30 days later. Several other Arizona cities are considering similar ordinances. On June 19, 2013, the Tucson City Council approved a civil unions ordinance. On July 5, the first civil union was granted in Bisbee. The councils of several towns and cities adopted a civil union ordinance: Jerome on July 30; Sedona on September 24; Clarkdale on November 12 and Cottonwood on December 17. A proposal failed in Camp Verde.

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