

**BABETTE JOSEPHS**, DEMOCRATIC MEMBER  
DEMOCRATIC CHAIR,  
STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

300 MAIN CAPITOL BUILDING  
P.O. BOX 202182  
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120-2182  
PHONE: 717.787.8529  
FAX: 717.787.5066  
E-MAIL: RepJosephs@pahouse.net  
WEBSITE: www.babette.org

1528 WALNUT STREET, SUITE 501  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19102  
PHONE: 215.893.1515  
FAX: 215.560.5816



**House of Representatives**  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE 182ND DISTRICT

COMMITTEES

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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO: Members of the House of Representatives**

**FROM: Representative Babette Josephs**

**DATE: July 14, 2011**

**SUBJECT: Request for Co-Sponsorship - Pennsylvania Marriage Equality Act**

On July 24, New York will truly enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by becoming the sixth state, joined by the District of Columbia, to extend marriage equality to all of its citizens. In two weeks, anywhere in that state anyone will be able to marry their life partner regardless of their gender.

I expect that an influx of same sex couples will be a boon to New York's wedding and tourism industries which like ours here in Pennsylvania were hard hit by the economic downturn. Weddings will bring new revenue for New York with increased sales tax collections, marriage license fees, local sales taxes, and in the city of New York, a hotel occupancy tax.

The Independent Democratic Conference of the New York State Senate recently released a report detailing the projected economic impact of marriage equality in New York. It is disheartening to look at the numbers and consider all the money Pennsylvania will be losing by continuing to practice bigotry. New York State stands to generate some \$391 million in increased economic activity, revenue, and savings during the three years after the marriage equality bill is made law. I have to assume that this will be pretty enticing to any entrepreneur looking to start a new business when it comes to choosing between Pennsylvania and New York. A promise of hundreds of millions of dollars about to enter an economy in the coming years is far more attractive as an incentive to the empty coffers and retrograde approach to social issues exhibited by Pennsylvania.

What does all this really say about our future? Economics aside, will we lose the best and the brightest (regardless of their sexual orientation) because we are a place viewed as remarkably backward as evidenced by the fact that we cannot even get a statewide non-discrimination bill through the legislature let alone allow same sex marriage? Will parents question sending their children to college in a state which currently preaches discriminatory policies as law? Perhaps this is a bit extreme, but who can really say how our lack of willingness to protect and support all our citizens will affect our reputation when comparisons are made on a whole host of issues with our neighbor to the North. And to be honest, I believe this sad comparison will only be made worse by the deep cuts recently made to education, protecting the environment and our most vulnerable citizens.

Obviously I will be there to fight further devastating cuts to our most basic services, but I want to be there to help reverse this decline of our reputation too. The first step I will take in this process will be to address the inequality faced each day by our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens. In the coming weeks, I will introduce the Pennsylvania Marriage Equality Act which will not only bring equality and recognition to the many good and solid same sex relationships that already exist here, but it will send a message that many of us are committed to reversing the sad and steep decline in our reputation and image.

I ask for your consideration to serve as a co-sponsor of this important legislation because only our strongest efforts to address issues both hard and controversial will push Pennsylvania to its rightful place as a location that lives in both the modern world and the current century.

Please contact Jennifer Belz in my Harrisburg office at [JBelz@pahouse.net](mailto:JBelz@pahouse.net) or at (717) 787-8529 to co-sponsor this important legislation. Thank you!