Supreme Court Issues Historic Decision on Marriage Equality

June 26, 2015

The following statement was issued by Ropes & Gray appellate & Supreme Court partner Douglas Hallward-Driemeier, who argued question two of the landmark marriage equality case, Obergefell v. Hodges:

“Today’s landmark decision in Obergefell v. Hodges marks a turning point in American history. It affirms that LGBT people have the same constitutional rights of liberty and equality as others do. The Court’s ruling means that same-sex couples can experience the rights and privileges of marriage in any state in our union. No longer will married same-sex couples face the prospect of their family relationships being dissolved upon crossing state borders.”

“We are one very significant step closer today to fulfilling the Constitution’s promise of equal protection for all our people. Today, a same-sex couple in Knoxville, Tennessee enjoys the same right to marry, and to remain married, as a couple in New York City.”

“America is a better place because of this decision. By affirming the constitutional rights of LGBT individuals and same-sex couples, the Court has made the rights of all of us more secure. We celebrate with all LGBT individuals, their families, friends, and faith communities this wonderful confirmation that they, and their relationships, have value and dignity.”

- Doug Hallward-Driemeier, partner, Ropes & Gray

On April 28, Mr. Hallward-Driemeier and Mary Bonauto, Civil Rights Project Director at Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) argued the historic marriage equality case before the U.S. Supreme Court. Ms. Bonauto presented arguments for question one: “Does the Fourteenth Amendment require a State to license a marriage between two people of the same sex?” and Mr. Hallward-Driemeier for question two: “Does the Fourteenth Amendment require a state to recognize a marriage between two people of the same sex when their marriage was lawfully licensed and performed out-of-state?”

The outcome in Obergefell represents the culmination of a distinguished history of Ropes & Gray’s pro bono work, particularly our work on LGBT issues and marriage equality. The firm has developed a reputation for assisting LGBT asylum-seekers and securing health care rights for transgender prisoners and people living with HIV. The firm, in partnership with GLAD, Lambda Legal and other organizations, played an important role in previous efforts to establish marriage equality in New York and Maryland and to secure insurance and inheritance rights for same-sex married couples. Ropes & Gray filed an amicus brief in the successful effort to establish marriage equality in Massachusetts, and signed onto another in the ultimately successful challenge to the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).

Ropes & Gray, with GLAD, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), the ACLU and Lambda Legal played pivotal roles in the case. Mary Bonauto, GLAD’s civil rights project director, argued the case in front of the court along with Mr. Hallward-Driemeier. The NCLR, the ACLU and Lambda Legal represented various plaintiffs in the matter.

Ropes & Gray’s role in the case was led by appellate & Supreme Court litigation partner Doug Hallward-Driemeier, who was supported by litigation associates Tom Brown, Paul Kellogg, Samira Omerovic, Josh Goldstein, Emerson Siegle and John Dey; litigation paralegal specialist Sophia Antzoulatos; and legal executive assistant Carole Murphy.

Copyright © 2017 Ropes & Gray LLP. All rights reserved. Attorney advertising. Prior results do not guarantee a similar outcome.