



Randy Perreira
President

HAWAII STATE AFL-CIO

320 Ward Avenue, Suite 209 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96814

Telephone: (808) 597-1441

Fax: (808) 593-2149

The Twenty-Sixth Legislature, State of Hawaii
Hawaii State Senate
Committee on Judiciary and Labor

Testimony by
Hawaii State AFL-CIO
January 25, 2011

S.B. 232 – RELATING TO CIVIL UNIONS

The Hawaii State AFL-CIO **strongly supports** the purpose and intent of S.B. 232 which would extend the same rights, benefits, protections, and responsibilities of spouses in a marriage to partners in a civil union.

Same-sex couples deserve the same rights and benefits as heterosexual couples who are married. Unfortunately, same-sex couples and their families are denied hundreds of rights and protections offered by the state of Hawaii. As a result, by refusing the legally recognize same-sex relationships, Hawaii among many others states deprive thousands of families the most important attributes of labor: the ability to take care of and provide for their family members.

The fact is many same-sex couples are our neighbors, police officers, firefighters, and teachers. Many keep us safe and educate our children. No longer should individuals who choose to have a same-sex relationship be discriminated against. In fact, it was not too long ago when interracial marriage was illegal in a number of states. Today, there are thousands of interracial marriages and no one thinks otherwise. It is time for Hawaii to move forward and accept civil unions to guarantee the same rights and protections as those who are married.

Without civil unions, the family truly suffers. When a partner in a same sex relationship passes away, their children and partner are not guaranteed their pensions and other survivor benefits. This is distressing and truly unnecessary. It undermines their financial health and well being. The child's quality of life completely changes for the worst, and while the loss of a parent is without a doubt devastating, at least a civil union would have protected the child and partner financially.

At the end of the day, same-sex couples are just like you and I. They have children; they love each other, and work with us day in and day out. Many protect us as police officers or firefighters, while some educate our children or perform complicated surgeries to save someone's life. In the end, we should not be afraid of change; but what we should be afraid of is that we have discriminated just like we have done in the past. It is time to say enough is enough, it is time to pass S.B. 232 and guarantee same-sex couples the same rights and benefits as those who are married. It is the right thing to do.