



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
Registry of Vital Records and Statistics
150 Mount Vernon Street, 1st Floor
Dorchester, MA 02125-3105

MITT ROMNEY
GOVERNOR

KERRY HEALEY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

RONALD PRESTON
SECRETARY

CHRISTINE C. FERGOUSON
COMMISSIONER

April 15, 2004

Dear City and Town Clerks and Boston Registrar:

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, in the case of *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, ruled that the Commonwealth may not bar same-sex couples from "the protections, benefits, and obligations of civil marriage." However, the Court delayed entry of judgment for 180 days "to permit the Legislature to take such action as it may deem appropriate in light of this opinion." The Court's ruling is currently scheduled to become effective on May 16, 2004 for implementation on the first business day thereafter.

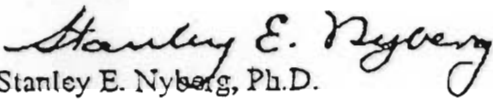
In light of the first step that the Legislature has taken to amend the Constitution to define marriage as the union of a man and a woman, the Governor has proposed seeking a further stay of the ruling until the amendment process is complete. However, the Executive Branch continues to prepare for every contingency, including the issuance of marriage licenses to same-sex applicants beginning in May.

The Registry of Vital Records and Statistics (RVRS) is in the process of preparing materials for readiness prior to the currently scheduled implementation date, Monday, May 17, 2004. RVRS is working closely with the Department of Public Health Office of the General Counsel to resolve legal questions, provide clear guidance, and to develop sound policy and procedure to correctly comply with this ruling.

RVRS is planning a series of regional information sessions for city and town clerks in order to provide a forum for questions and answers. Attendance at these meetings will be limited to city or town clerks or their representatives who have registered using the attached form. Please see the attached schedule to select a session that best suits your needs.

We look forward to working with you

Sincerely,


Stanley E. Nyberg, Ph.D.
Registrar

State Library of Massachusetts

Encl.