

What's in a Number?

1138.

It's not a secret code.
It's not the address of the newest hotspot.
It's one number, but it adds up.

At last count, the United States General Accounting Office reported 1,138 federal rights, protections and benefits that come with marriage. That means heterosexual married couples automatically receive these rights and protections, while same-sex couples — even those in civil unions, domestic partnerships and marriages — do not.

This is unequal — and it's unfair.

Many of these benefits, such as tax credits, are well known and may even factor into a heterosexual couple's decision to marry. Others can be taken for granted but carry great impact on the lives of committed same-sex partners. Some of these are:

- **Use of the Family and Medical Leave Act**
Same-sex couples are denied this federal provision allowing up to 12 weeks unpaid leave to care for their sick partners.
- **Fairness in taxation of health insurance for one's family**
Employer-sponsored health care for domestic partners is assessed federal taxes, while the same coverage for heterosexual spouses and their dependants is not.
- **Social Security benefits for surviving partners and their dependents**
In cases of death or disability, Social Security benefits are not issued to same-sex partners or their partner's children.
- **The right to petition for a partner's immigration**
Family-sponsored visas are commonly distributed to those wishing to immigrate to the United States, but under federal law, same-sex relationships do not constitute family.

These are just a few of the provisions and protections provided exclusively for heterosexual married couples.

There is far more work to be done in the fight for equality. Lambda Legal remains in the forefront of this battle, pushing to end discrimination in civil marriage so that same-sex couples in this country have the same choices — and the same rights — as other couples have.

Let 1138 remind us what we have to work for in this fight.

Visit <http://www.lambdalegal.org> to find out more about Lambda Legal's work for marriage equality and other high-impact litigation, public education and advocacy on behalf of equality and civil rights for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and people with HIV.

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