



## NEWS ADVISORY

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For immediate release

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### Missoula's Domestic Partnership Registry Opens

Domestic partners in Montana now have a place to register their relationships. In July, the Missoula City Council approved a resolution creating a Domestic Partnership Registry to support the right and dignity of unmarried couples to have their relationships recognized by the City of Missoula.

City Clerk Marty Rehbein announced the City's registry is now open and accepting applications from same-sex and opposite-sex domestic partners in Montana.

"Missoula is a beacon of hope for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) Montanans," said Missoula City Council representative Caitlin Cople, who led the effort to establish the registry in Missoula. "We passed the first inclusive non-discrimination ordinance in 2010, and we are continuing to send the message that Missoula is a safe and welcoming place for all families with this registry."

Cathryn Oakley, Legislative Counsel for State and Municipal Advocacy at the Human Rights Campaign, added praise for the City's equality initiatives.

"Missoula is great example of an enlightened city, dedicated to treating its LGBT citizens with the dignity and respect they deserve," she said. "This is made clear by City leaders' efforts to make laws and policies inclusive for all Missoulians. Domestic partner registries, like the one now available to gay and lesbian couples in Missoula, offer limited but important benefits. Missoula is once again showing why it is a leader in municipal equality."

Applying to be included on the list is voluntary. Although it doesn't grant any legal rights to couples, it may be useful for emergency workers or health care professionals to know whom to contact in an emergency. Cople noted that the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest LGBT advocacy

organization, has seen municipal domestic partner registries lead to statewide changes in insurance benefits and relationship recognition such as civil unions and marriage equality.

When considering whether or not to apply, couples should be aware that the official application forms and the names of partners listed on the registry are public records and may be released to a third party, if requested.

“Coming out always requires bravery, and I’m proud that Missoula is offering one more way for couples who can and want to come out,” Copple said.

To be placed on the Registry, couples must complete an official affidavit and application form swearing they meet the criteria, and sign it in front of a notary public. Domestic partners interested in registering can learn more and find the official form online at [www.ci.missoula.mt.us/partnershipregistry](http://www.ci.missoula.mt.us/partnershipregistry). Forms can also be picked up at the City Clerk Office.

**Contacts for interviews:**

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## **Criteria Required to Register a Domestic Partnership with the City of Missoula**

### **Section 1**

Applicants must declare that they meet ALL of the following requirements:

- At least one of the partners in the domestic partnership has a physical address in and resides within the State of Montana.
- Are not related by blood to a degree of closeness that would prohibit legal marriage; and
- Are both at least 18 years of age; and
- Reside together and intend to do so permanently; and
- Are not legally married under Montana state law; and
- Are responsible for each other's common welfare; and
- Are each other's sole domestic partner; and
- Were mentally competent to consent to contract when the domestic partnership began.

### **Section 2**

Applicants must declare that they have:

- A marriage, domestic partnership or civil union license from another state.

**OR**

- At least TWO of the joint living expenses or decisions in the following list must apply to the applicants:
  - Common ownership of real property or a common leasehold interest in such property;  
or
  - Power of attorney for health care decisions; or
  - Joint bank account or a joint credit account; or
  - Common ownership of a motor vehicle; or
  - Designation as a beneficiary for life insurance or retirement benefits or under the partner's will; or
  - Shared parenting or shared legal guardianship of a child; or
  - Other such proof to establish financial interdependency under the circumstances of their particular case as considered to be sufficient.