



# Advocacy Update

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LGBT Rights and Gift of Life  
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## LGBT Rights and the Supreme Court

Last week, as Jews around the world gathered for their Passover *seders*, the Supreme Court experienced another kind of gathering: they heard oral arguments for [two of the biggest cases](#) this term. One case, heard on Tuesday, was *Hollingsworth v. Perry*, and concerns California's constitutional ban on same-sex marriage (commonly known as "Prop 8"). Depending on how the Justices rule on this case, marriage equality could be restored in California and the Justices could potentially even declare that the right to marry someone of the same sex is guaranteed to all Americans.

A second case, heard on Wednesday, is *Windsor v. the United States*. This case concerns the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) which, among other things, prohibits the federal government from recognizing any marriages other than those between one man and one woman. If they uphold the Second Circuit court ruling that Edith Windsor's rights were indeed violated when she was denied over \$300,000 in inheritance money when her wife passed away in 2009, the Supreme Court could declare this controversial part of DOMA unconstitutional and require the federal government to recognize the rights of legally married same sex couples.

While LGBT rights have been important to WRJ for many years (including a resolution as early as [1991](#) working to ensure civil rights protection for LGBT individuals), we took a particularly active role in this round of cases by signing on to a "friends-of-the-court" *amicus* brief in the *Windsor* and *Hollingsworth* cases. Along with the URJ, CCAR, [dozens of other prominent national organizations](#), and the Obama Administration itself, WRJ expressed its official support for these landmark cases through its signatures on the briefs.

Stay tuned for [updates](#) on these crucial decisions, which will probably be released early June!

## Gift of Life

One of every 200 Americans will need a bone marrow transplant in their lifetime – yet a patient's best chance of finding a match for a transplant is either from within the family or from someone with whom the person shares a common racial and/or ethnic background.

This year, URJ has started an exciting new partnership with Gift of Life, one of the nation's leading public bone marrow registries that helps children and adults find donors, facilitating life-saving bone marrow and blood stem cell transplants. Gift of Life works with synagogues and Jewish communities across the country and has, over its short decades in existence, increased Ashkenazi Jews' chances of finding a match from a mere 5% to almost 70%. With this partnership, the Reform Movement is encouraging congregations to set up swab drives, thereby entering even more people into the registry. Doing so is a simple process that can help save lives!

There are many exciting ways for sisterhoods to become involved in this important effort!

1. Make sure you and other members of your sisterhood are registered! Attend a local drive or log on to [www.giftoflife.org](http://www.giftoflife.org) to find out how you can register. Encourage your friends and family to join the registry as well.

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit [www.wrj.org/social-justice-home](http://www.wrj.org/social-justice-home)

2. As a sisterhood, you can host a drive in your synagogue or your community. Gift of Life also makes for a meaningful Bar/Bat Mitzvah project through URJ's new Hero for Life project. If you or your child are interested in learning about this program, you can email Rachael Youra at [ryoura@rac.org](mailto:ryoura@rac.org).

3. Join the Yom Kippur Swab Drive movement. Since 2010, Gift of Life has been partnering with synagogues on this important day, bringing congregants the chance to begin the New Year with a simple act that could save a life. URJ, through the Religious Action Center, wants to help congregations participate in this important mitzvah. The RAC will provide all of the supplies and guidance to plan and execute successful drives. If you think this is something your sisterhood or congregation may be interested in, please email [Rachael Youra](mailto:Rachael.Youra).