

Fresno gay marriage advocates hold rally after Supreme Court arguments

By Andrea Castillo



From left, Randy Oftedal, Judy Oftedal, the Rev. Tucker Russell and Chris Caldwell wave to passing motorists in front of the Robert E. Coyle Federal Courthouse to show support for marriage equality in Fresno, California on April 28, 2015. SILVIA FLORES — THE FRESNO BEE | [Buy Photo](#)

- *Some Valley residents rally after a day of U.S. Supreme Court same-sex marriage arguments.*
- *Justices are addressing two fundamental questions — whether the Constitution compels states to license same-sex marriages, and whether states must recognize such marriages performed elsewhere.*
- *A decision expected by June 30, the end of the court's term.*

When Cheryl and Sandy Waymack first married in 1995, they went all out for the ceremony before friends and family, walking down the aisle in a dress and suit, serving wedding cake, then setting off on a honeymoon.

But the Visalia couple realized that as lesbians, their marriage didn't count under the law. They became two single women moving in together, then two single women buying a house together and a single woman putting her "friend" on an insurance policy.

After the Supreme Court [weighed arguments about same-sex marriage](#) Tuesday, the Waymacks and other local advocates gathered in front of the Robert E. Coyle Federal Courthouse in downtown Fresno to show support for

marriage equality. The group of about 25 held signs with phrases such as “Legalize love” and waved rainbow flags. Cars honked as they drove by, eliciting cheers and waves from the small crowd.

Tuesday’s 2 1/2-hour oral argument revolved around marriage limitations in Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee and Michigan.

Each of the states has restricted marriage in a variety of ways. In 2004, for instance, 74.5% of Kentucky voters ratified a state constitutional amendment that declares only marriage between “one man and one woman” to be valid.

Sandy Waymack said the United States values marriage. But with [13 states continuing to ban same-sex marriage](#), she said gay couples — even those living in states with marriage equality — face discrimination. For example, she said, if she and her wife go on vacation in one of those 13 states and one of them gets hurt, the other won’t be allowed hospital visitation rights.

“It’s like invisible fences around our states and the ones that don’t (recognize gay marriage),” she said.

Justices addressed two fundamental questions during the argument, which was more than twice as long as the typical Supreme Court hearing.

One is whether the Constitution’s 14th Amendment, which guarantees due process and equal protection of the law, compels states to license same-sex marriages. The other is whether the same constitutional protections require states to recognize same-sex marriages performed elsewhere.

Chris Jarvis, president of [Gay Central Valley](#), said that while California already recognizes same-sex marriages, a favorable Supreme Court ruling will give gays and lesbians here peace of mind and the ability to focus on other disparities.

Among other issues important to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, Jarvis said, are employment discrimination, immigration rights among married gay couples and transgender rights, such as gender-neutral bathrooms. He said a favorable marriage equality ruling would set the standard that LGBT people deserve equal rights and make it easier for advocates to pursue those other issues.

“For LGBT people, a lot of the other issues are more important than marriage because while marriage only affects a certain part of the population, these other issues affect people on a daily basis,” he said.

A decision is expected by June 30, the last day of the court’s term.

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