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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **EMPOWERING SPIRITS APPLAUDS PASSAGE OF NH MARRIAGE EQUALITY BILL**

New Hampshire set to become 6<sup>th</sup> state to legalize same-sex marriage

CONCORD, NH — The Empowering Spirits Foundation, a national lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization, today applauded the New Hampshire Legislature for voting in favor of the same-sex marriage bill amendment, which provides language to protect religious institutions not wanting to participate in same-sex marriages. The state Senate voted 14-10 Wednesday morning to the compromise legislation, and the state House later voted 198-176 in favor of the amendment. New Hampshire Governor John Lynch has stated that he will sign the same-sex marriage bill into law if it included strengthened protections for religious institutions. Should the legislation go into effect January 1, 2010 as predicted, New Hampshire will become the 6<sup>th</sup> state to legalize same-sex marriage.

"The amended legislation is considerate to both sides and provides equal rights and protections to all in New Hampshire," says A. Latham Staples, Empowering Spirits Foundation Executive Director.

"America is at a turning point. Recent advances toward equality in Iowa, Vermont, Maine, the District of Columbia and now New Hampshire show that the tide is changing in our favor," added Staples. "The LGBT community isn't asking for special rights or to compromise the beliefs of those who are critical of us. We are merely seeking equal rights, as envisioned by our founding fathers and guaranteed by the Constitution. And I believe people are starting to realize that gays and lesbians are an important segment of society, and are entitled to all of the rights and benefits of marriage."

Merely two months ago Lynch expressed his opposition to same-sex marriage, and further stated that the state's two-year-old civil-union law provided sufficient rights and protections to gay couples.

"We have a long way to go before all LGBT Americans enjoy equal rights," Staples added. "It's important that we act on this surge of support and continue to impact those who know little about the LGBT community to foster thought and change toward equality."

### **About the Empowering Spirits Foundation**

The ESF is a national, grass-roots based civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. ESF members engage in service-oriented activities in communities typically opposed to equal rights. It is our hope that in working side-by-side with our non-LGBT neighbors they may come to see similarities rather than differences in each of us, and that we can engage in dialogue through non-confrontational means to promote equality. Additionally, the ESF develops community awareness, collaborates with other coalitions, and empowers individuals and organizations to engage in the political process for equality through educational endeavors.

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