

No. R-151. House concurrent resolution commemorating the 25th anniversary of Act 91 of 2000, establishing Vermont as the first state to legalize civil unions.

(H.C.R.127)

Offered by Representative Emmons of Springfield

Offered by Senator Cummings

Whereas, on December 20, 1999, the Vermont Supreme Court issued the landmark decision, *Baker v. State*, 170 Vt. 194, holding that the exclusion of same-sex couples from access to the benefits and rights of marriage licenses under Vermont's law violated the Common Benefits Clause of the Vermont Constitution, and

Whereas, the Court allowed the General Assembly to consider and enact legislation consistent with the constitutional mandate described in its decision that could be civil marriage or a different legal status that delivered "the common benefits and protections that flow from marriage under Vermont law," and

Whereas, in 2000, the House Committee on Judiciary, after researching the law and history of marriage and taking testimony from hundreds of witnesses offering differing viewpoints, introduced H.847 to establish the legal status of civil union for gay and lesbian couples, and

Whereas, on March 16, 2000, after intense and extensive debate, the House advanced the bill to the Senate, and

Whereas, the Senate Committee on Judiciary conducted a vigorous review of the House's work, took testimony from people across the State, revised the bill, and on April 19, 2000, approved an amended version, and

Whereas, on April 25, 2000, the House concurred with the Senate amendments, sending the bill to Governor Howard Dean, who, on April 26, 2000, signed H.847 into law as Act 91, and

Whereas, without the Vermonters who risked their safety and more to challenge Vermont's marriage law, in particular, the *Baker* case plaintiffs, Stan Baker and Peter Harrigan, Nina Beck and Stacy Jolles, and Lois Farnham and Holly Puterbaugh, and their attorneys, Beth Robinson, Susan M. Murray, and Mary Bonauto, Act 91 would never have been enacted, and

Whereas, Vermont was the first state in the nation to enact civil unions legislation, and Act 91 was the foundation for the enactment of Act 3 of 2009, the nation's first marriage equality statute, *now therefore be it*

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly commemorates the 25th anniversary of Act 91 of 2000 establishing Vermont as the first state to legalize civil unions, *and be it further*

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to the *Baker v. State* plaintiffs and their attorneys, to the Pride Center of Vermont, and to Outright Vermont.