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# ARIZONA REPUBLIC

SUNDAY, JULY 27, 2014

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### EXECUTION CONTROVERSY

## How the lethal injection debate evolved

A complex web of issues played out on a gurney on death row in Florence.

Michael Kiefer  
The Republic • [azcentral.com](http://azcentral.com)

Even before convicted murderer Joseph Rudolph Wood was strapped to a gurney and the state of Arizona's executioner ran intravenous lines into his arms, the drug used to kill him in an unusually drawn-out execution, midazolam, had proven controversial.

A federal judge had termed earlier executions in which it was used as "flawed."

From the time the drugs started flowing, it took Wood almost two hours to die. Witnesses watched as he gasped and snored for much of that time.

Execution by other lethal-injection drugs usually takes about 10 minutes.

But those drugs are no longer available.

State officials, from Department of Corrections Director Charles Ryan to Gov. Jan Brewer, insist that the execution was not botched.

But what happened and why are still under review by Corrections and, separately, by a federal court.

Wood's long, slow death

See EXECUTION, Page A8

### CARDINALS OPEN TRAINING CAMP

## Back, bigger and better

Despite tough division, Cards could surprise doubters.



Wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald signs autographs Saturday during the Cardinals' training camp opener. CHERYL EVANS/THE REPUBLIC

The Cardinals opened the doors to their Glendale stadium on Saturday. In just more than six months, the NFL will turn out the lights.

In between, we ask a favor from a football team that has taken over the Valley: Don't let us down. Stand up once again to the toughest division in sports. Be the stan-

dard-bearer for a market that needs some elevation and inspiration.

Don't be a one-hit wonder. We've seen enough of those around here.

"I think by far this is the most talented team I've ever been on, top to bottom," Cardinals quarterback Carson Palmer said.

The optimism is omnipres-

ent and exhilarating. The Cardinals are aiming to become the first NFL team to win a Super Bowl played in its own stadium. Spirited fans that showed up for Saturday's training camp debut were cheering heartily after successful passes and field-goal attempts. Can you imagine the

See BICKLEY, Page A16



DAN BICKLEY

Fitzgerald's future: Management says it's committed to making sure salary-cap money is there for the franchise's star receiver to retire as a Cardinal. C1

### GAY MARRIAGE

## When they stopped waiting

Suit against gay-marriage ban was no orchestrated effort. It began with a simple question.

Shaun McKinnon  
The Republic • [azcentral.com](http://azcentral.com)

Joe Connolly scanned the faces at University Lutheran Church in Tempe. He had a question on his mind, and he needed to ask it of someone in particular.

Tree lights twinkled at the front of the hall, the white

glow reflecting the deep red of potted poinsettias. In a few minutes, the midweek service would begin, an evening of spoken words and carols to celebrate a day in Advent, the Christian season of anticipation before Christmas.

Finally, Connolly spotted Shawn Aiken, a Phoenix lawyer he had known for years through the church. He

worked his way through small talk. Then he asked his question.

"Do you know anyone who would be interested in helping us file a lawsuit against the state regarding the ban on same-sex marriage?"

As he waited for an answer, Connolly tried not to appear

See MARRIAGE, Page A10



Terry Pochert (left) and his husband, Joe Connolly, are suing for the right to marry in Arizona. PAT SHANNAHAN/THE REPUBLIC

The state's case: In response to lawsuits, attorneys for Arizona argue issues of history, family. A10

### GAZA FIGHTING



MAHMUD HAMS/GETTY IMAGES

Israel extends a humanitarian cease-fire, but Hamas declines and renews its rocket attacks.

USA TODAY Full report on B2

### ALSO

**Voter-registration deadline:** If you want to vote in the Aug. 26 primary but haven't registered, Monday is your last chance. You have several options, including registering online. A6

**Packing pistols:** Customers are free to carry firearms into Shooters Grill in Rifle, Colo. In fact, they are encouraged to do so — even the waitresses are armed. A21

**Blame game:** Employees need to know how to deal with blame in the workplace. Don't be a push-over, but accept responsibility with grace when you should. And try to point to facts, not at people. E6

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## From the Front Page

## Marriage

Continued from Page A1

impatient, but he felt like he had already been waiting a long time.

In 2008, he had married Terry Pochert, his companion of nearly 19 years, in another Lutheran church, a much grander one in San Francisco. But their vows were not recognized when they returned home to Arizona, where legislators and voters had outlawed gay marriage.

Five years later, in mid-2013, in a case known as *Windsor* for the plaintiff's last name, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned part of a federal ban on same-sex unions. It also let a lower court invalidate a voter prohibition in California. In the months following, a change seemed to sweep the country, as courts and legislatures made such marriages legal in Illinois, Hawaii and New Mexico and lawsuits to overturn bans moved forward in more than a dozen other states.

Connolly and Pochert had been waiting for the same kind of change in Arizona. They wanted the thousands of gay and lesbian couples in the state to win the same rights as any other married couple: rights to adopt jointly, make health decisions for one another.

Which led Connolly to church that night in December, to their lawyer friend, to his question.

Aiken took a few moments to consider. "Let me think about that for a few days," he said. "I'll get back to you."

Connolly and Aiken didn't yet know it, but their borrowed moment in the back of the church would soon draw Arizona onto a national stage, into a rapidly shifting debate over marriage rights and traditions.

And they wouldn't be the only ones swept up. They would soon be flanked by other couples from Flagstaff to Tucson, people they had never met, who had all decided they didn't want to wait for another Legislature or another election or another effort by an organized campaign from the outside.

They wanted to change the law themselves. They were done waiting.

## The onion-ring story

Connolly and Pochert met in 1995 in Michigan. Pochert was an engineering supervisor at WXYZ-TV and Connolly worked in publishing. They fell for each other inside a few weeks and, in short order, moved in together.

"Now tell the onion-ring story," Connolly prods from his side of the dining-room table in their house along a golf course in Maricopa.

"Well," Pochert says, the memory fresh again, "we started to get serious and we went to a restaurant and our dinner included onion rings. So we decided to exchange onion rings. It was silly, but it became more serious."

"I said something like, 'If I could marry you now, I would,'" Connolly says. "And that was when Terry handed me the onion ring."

They were serious, but at the time, same-sex marriages were not legal anywhere in the United States. In 1993, the Hawaii Supreme Court had cast doubt on the legality of gay-marriage bans, but in Michigan, onion rings were as legal as it got. The couple moved to Arizona in 1997. By the time they arrived, gay marriage was forbidden by law twice over.

In 1980, as part of a bill revising some of Arizona's marriage-licensing requirements, the Legislature inserted language that defined a valid union as one between a man and a woman.



David Chaney (left) and Clark Rowley joined six other gay couples to sue Arizona for the right to legally marry. They hope to ensure that they can act as caregivers for each other and make decisions on behalf of each other. PHOTOS BY PAT SHANNAHAN/THE REPUBLIC



Mason Hite (left) and Chris Devine want to change the law so that they can both legally adopt their sons, Angel, Ricky and Dominick.



Suzanne Cummins (left) and her partner, Holly Mitchell, want both of them to be recognized as the legal parents of Cummins' adopted daughters.

Sixteen years later, Congress passed the federal Defense of Marriage Act and Arizona lawmakers followed up with their own measure, which specifically prohibited same-sex marriage. The bill also blocked recognition of any such ceremonies performed in other states.

After several health scares drove home the uncertainty of acting as each other's caregivers, Connolly and Pochert gathered legal documents and contracts that would approximate some of the benefits available to married couples. Wills. Trusts. Powers of attorney. Authority over health-care decisions. Hospital-visitation rights.

They bought rings in Jerome one afternoon but put them in a safe-deposit box, waiting until they could exchange them in a legal wedding, one in a church.

By 2008, when a California court overturned that state's ban on gay marriages, Connolly and Pochert decided the time was right. On July 4, 2008, they married at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in San Francisco.

"We were so happy but also sad that our friends couldn't be there for that glorious day," Pochert said. "From that point on, we started asking, 'Why can't we do this in Arizona?'"

Not long after the wedding, Arizona voters amended the state Constitution to reiterate the ban on same-sex marriage. Connolly and Pochert were undeterred. After the Supreme Court rulings last year, they began making calls. No one else seemed ready to act. Even the ACLU passed.

And so on a Wednesday evening early in the Advent season, they stopped waiting for someone else.

## High-stakes lawsuit

Before that night in the church, Shawn Aiken had not

followed the marriage-equality issue beyond stories he read in the newspaper. His clients typically brought him cases in intellectual property, trade secrets, unfair competitive practices.

Surely this case would turn into a high-profile, high-stakes lawsuit, he thought. Who could handle it?

He had someone in mind. But the more he thought about it, the more he couldn't stop and he knew why. "This," he told himself, "is something I want to do." And it was a moment in time that might not return.

Arizona's view of marriage equality had teetered away from an absolute opposition toward some allowance. Voters had barred gay marriage in 2008, but only after turning down a ballot measure two years earlier that outlawed both marriage and any equivalent, such as a civil union. In the span of a year, four towns and cities — Tucson, Bisbee, Jerome and Sedona — voted to recognize civil unions.

At dinner one evening, Aiken put a voice to his thoughts with his wife, Lynn, and his son Eric, a second-year law student at Arizona State University.

"Here's a new case," he said and he laid it out. "I love the clients. I like the issues. What do you think?"

Take it, they said.

## Legal issues clear

On Dec. 20, as Aiken waded through his research, U.S. District Judge Robert Shelby overturned the ban on same-sex marriages in Utah. Aiken read the decision and in it he saw the legal issues crystallize: The case was about the constitutional rights of due process and equal protection under the law.

Marriage restrictions, the ruling said, denied gay couples the fundamental right to marry, which courts had established

based on the 14th Amendment's due-process clause. And, the judge wrote, the laws wrongly discriminated against a group of people, excluding them from the benefits of marriage in violation of the equal-protection clause.

For Aiken, the Utah decision confirmed a shift in the legal landscape after the two Supreme Court opinions. And it affirmed his belief that Arizona should not wait any longer.

"The law was changing faster than you could read in the daily paper," Aiken said. "After Utah, it was 'Katie, bar the door.'"

Aiken would work on the case on his own time and would not bill the couples. His daughter, Ellen, already a practicing lawyer, asked to work on the case with her dad.

Aiken also told a few close associates he was looking for others to join. He needed couples who had married legally in other states, couples who had not. Couples with kids, couples without. He wouldn't have to wait long.

## A friend of a friend

A few days after Christmas, Chris Devine and Mason Hite were on their way to meet friends for coffee at a central Phoenix Starbucks when Hite's cellphone rang. He talked for a few minutes, listened mostly.

It was a lawyer, he told Devine, named Shawn Aiken, a friend of a friend. He's going to sue the state and try to make it legal for us to be married here. He heard about us and wants us to join the lawsuit.

Hite and Devine had married on a beach in San Diego in 2008 and soon after decided they wanted kids. They became foster parents and, in 2011, applied to adopt Ricky, by then a 7-year-old boy who had been placed with them. Because Ari-

zona laws won't allow two gay men to adopt a child, Hite was named Ricky's legal father. Devine had to listen as a lawyer and a judge described his husband as a single man adopting a child.

Now this lawyer wanted to know if they would join a suit to change the law. They had waited long enough. They wanted in.

Across town in Chandler, Suzanne Cummins got a call from someone she'd met through foster care and adoption cases. There's a lawyer who's working on a case to change Arizona's marriage laws. Can he call you?

Cummins and her partner, Holly Mitchell, had been together since their first date to a Diamondbacks game in 2007. They had provided foster care for two girls and moved to adopt them, but, like Hite and Devine, had to choose one legal parent. Cummins adopted the girls, Jessica and Madisyn. Mitchell had to hope she could find understanding teachers and caregivers who would recognize her as a parent, too.

Then last fall, Madisyn fell ill and needed medical treatment. Cummins was at work, and when Mitchell took her daughter to the doctor's office, she was turned away because she wasn't a legal parent.

The couple talked about leaving Arizona for a state that would recognize them both, worried about what might happen if they waited for change at home.

They wanted in.

David Chaney and Clark Rowley were at a Fiesta Bowl event just before the new year when they ran into someone they knew, a woman who worked at a Biltmore district law office.

"You two would be perfect for what we're doing," she said. She told them about Aiken's plans.

Chaney and Rowley had met in 2008, bonding over a game of backgammon. They traded vows two years later on the plaza at the Scottsdale Civic Center, standing in front of 300 friends who all wore dressy English hats.

They considered marrying legally elsewhere but wanted Arizona to honor their vows. They had no kids but dealt with ongoing health issues that could require one of them to make decisions in an emergency, decisions not every hospital or doctor would honor without a legal union.

Chaney and Rowley talked about what it would mean, about the public scrutiny, the effects on their families. They decided the only way they could make something happen was to stop waiting and get involved.

They wanted in.

On the first Friday in January, Rowley and Chaney joined the other three couples on a conference call. Aiken sketched out his plan and a timetable and tried to prepare the small band for a potentially tortuous road ahead. At the end of the call, no one backed out. No one suggested waiting.

On Jan. 6, barely a month after the Advent service, Aiken filed a 24-page document with the U.S. District Court in Phoenix. It listed eight plaintiffs.

"COMPLAINT FOR PERMANENT INJUNCTION AND DECLARATORY JUDGMENT," it read. "Plaintiffs ask this court to follow the reasoning in *Windsor* and strike Arizona's ban on same-sex marriage."

The case had come together quietly, quickly, with no publicity and no input from outside the small circle. They'd be hearing about that soon enough.

## A rare meeting

On a Saturday morning five days after filing the complaint,

Please see next page

## Ban backers say it's to keep marriages strong

Shaun McKinnon  
The Republic • azcentral.com

One of the central arguments in the gay-marriage lawsuits against Arizona is the question of how the ban came to be.

Plaintiffs outline a state intent on taking something away from gay Arizonans, through hearings, amendments and incremental changes that, the suits suggest, continued to restate the same law.

In its responses, the state of Arizona puts forth a different view.

The state's lawyers argue Arizona was never seeking to deny couples a right to marry. Instead, they say, the state had always defined marriage as a

union between a man and a woman — later efforts were simply to ensure the original definition wouldn't change.

"If you look through the common law and the history of Arizona back to territorial days, marriage was a contract between a man and a woman," said Caleb Dalton, litigation counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom, a private group helping to defend the state in the case.

"That's been the understood definition of marriage," he said. "The recent laws that the plaintiffs have challenged didn't change anything. They merely reaffirmed that definition."

Although both lawsuits challenging Arizona's marriage laws named state and

county officials as defendants, Attorney General Tom Horne hired the alliance to help argue the case and named its lawyers special assistant attorneys general.

Alliance Defending Freedom specializes in religious-freedom issues and has led the defense of marriage cases in Oklahoma and Virginia. Judges in both states have overturned marriage bans, but those rulings have been appealed.

Attorneys filed their final arguments in Arizona last week.

Alliance attorneys lay out the state's case against the lawsuits point by point:

» The state regulates marriage for the primary purpose of protecting relationships

that would produce children and let those children grow up with a biological mother and father.

Dalton said marriage laws are meant to ensure a stable environment exists for children and aren't based on any sort of ill will toward gay people.

» Redefining marriage would cast doubt on the value of a mother and a father raising children, the alliance said, which undermines the state's interest in promoting stable homes.

"You have to start with the foundation that a biological mother and father is the ideal situation for every child to grow up in," Dalton said. "We know that doesn't occur in every situation, but that's the

ideal."

» Changing marriage laws would weaken the institution rather than strengthen it.

In earlier documents, lawyers offered evidence they say suggests redefining marriage would lead to fewer men and women marrying each other and greater instability in existing marriages.

Included were statistics showing that in five states where same-sex marriage had become legal, overall marriage rates had dropped from 2010 to 2011 and the divorce rate in one state, Massachusetts, had risen sharply.

If the court rules in favor of the couples, the alliance has asked the court to stay its decision immediately to allow the state to appeal.

From the Front Page



Natalie (left) and Meagan Metz are suing to marry in Arizona to ensure they can take care of each other's health.



Robin Reece (left) and Renee Kaminski seek to ensure they can care for their son. PHOTOS BY PAT SHANNAHAN/THE REPUBLIC

Continued from previous page

Aiken opened his law office near Camelback Road and 24th Street for a rare weekend meeting.

Jenny Pizer was the law and policy project director for Lambda Legal, the national organization that has overseen cases that overturned gay-marriage bans in other states.

She had worked in Arizona on other cases, notably an ongoing, and so far successful, attempt to restore health coverage for domestic partners of employees in state agencies.

Pizer had been talking with other lawyers and representatives of Arizona's LGBT community about a marriage-equality lawsuit.

Some activists wanted the state to join the national movement soon. Pizer counseled patience. They were ready to litigate, she says now, but a Nevada case was working its way through the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the same court that oversees Arizona. Waiting on those results could strengthen their position.

So the national activists waited. And while they were waiting, a surprise set of pages crossed a clerk's desk somewhere in downtown Phoenix. The first defendant listed: Joseph Connolly. The header: "COMPLAINT FOR PERMANENT INJUNCTION AND DECLARATORY JUDGMENT."

By Saturday morning, Pizer was sitting in Aiken's office.

The two had never met before. Aiken replayed for her the events of the last month. Pizer listened closely, offering advice. Both say the meeting was cordial, that Pizer left believing Aiken's group was committed to their cause.

By March, with the Nevada 9th Circuit case still in progress, Lambda Legal would file a suit of its own.

Pizer says she had heard from other potential clients and from activists and educational groups in Arizona who still wanted Lambda to act. The two suits, she says, don't conflict.

"This is not a competitive endeavor," Pizer said. "It is complementary ways of showing how many people are harmed in different ways."

At the federal courthouse in Phoenix, Aiken's case was immediately assigned a judge based on the next available docket. It turned out to be U.S. District Judge John Sedwick, a senior judge from Alaska who was helping in the overworked Arizona district.

Sedwick was a familiar face for LGBT activists in Arizona and for Pizer and Lambda. He had presided over the state employee-domestic partner benefits case, ruling in Lambda's favor.

If Lambda Legal had expected to be the first to present plaintiffs in a case against the state's ban, Aiken's case had surprised them.

But Aiken was in for his own surprise. Someone else had been gathering plaintiffs even earlier.

As married as could be

Renee Kaminski opened an e-mail one evening last fall. Three-year-old Austin was in the other room, and she had finished her work on the books of The R2 Studio, the Flagstaff wedding-photography business she managed with Robin Reece, her partner and Austin's other mother.

She scanned the e-mail. A local lawyer was looking for people interested in challenging Arizona's marriage laws. Kaminski had expressed an interest earlier. Now the lawyer wanted to meet.

She showed the e-mail to Reece. They had lived together more than six

years, but until Austin came along in 2010, most of their conversations about marriage were work-related.

They had trod scores of aisles together, then scurried off to the side.

"Marriage isn't legal for us," Reece would tell herself. "It will probably never happen in my lifetime."

They had exchanged rings privately and considered themselves as married as they could be.

Austin was conceived through artificial insemination in early 2010, with a sperm donation from a close friend. Reece carried him and was preparing to give birth when complications arose. She was rushed to a Flagstaff hospital and, once born, Austin was flown to a hospital in Phoenix.

Kaminski followed by car, but when she arrived at the hospital, the staff wouldn't let her see Austin. She wasn't the legal mother and had no rights beyond those of a visitor.

"Doesn't he have a father?" one staff member asked.

Kaminski cried and called her mother, a nurse back in Flagstaff. Several hours later, she finally saw Austin.

She realized she was in for a lifetime of these situations if she and Reece couldn't legally marry, if they waited.

Now here was a chance to protect Austin. To have what all those couples in their photographs had. To stop waiting.

They wanted in.

Ryan Stevens, a Flagstaff lawyer, had been thinking about the marriage laws in Arizona in the months since the U.S. Supreme Court had shaken up the legal world. One day, he was talking with some friends who had recently married aboard a ferry on Puget Sound in Seattle.

Natalie and Meagan Metz (Meagan was born Meagan Pugh, but took her new wife's name) had met not long before Reece and Kaminski. They became friends first, then fell into a relationship. They knew they wanted to get married and held out hope at first that Arizona might allow it someday.

They wanted kids, they wanted the legal protections and, as Meagan fell ill with a form of lupus, they wanted assurances that Natalie could assist with her wife's health care.

Stevens had approached another Flagstaff lawyer, Mik Jordahl, who was more experienced in constitutional law. They soon agreed they wanted to challenge the laws. They signed up Natalie and Meagan and then sought others. They met with Reece and Kaminski and knew they were the ones.

With two strong couples as plaintiffs, Stevens and Jordahl decided they would wait no longer and began to draft a complaint.

They were working on researching the law in early January when they got word that four couples and a lawyer in Phoenix had changed everyone's plans.

From four to seven

The Thursday after he met with the lawyer from Lambda Legal, Aiken met Stevens at the Changing Hands bookstore in Tempe. The two talked about the case, the law, the people.

Over a few days, they reached an agreement: Stevens and Jordahl would join the case and the legal team, bringing their clients with them. Aiken would file an amended complaint, something he had already planned to do.

Other couples had called Aiken's offices in the days since he filed, all interested in joining the case. He listened to their stories. Most were compelling but similar to what he already had. He

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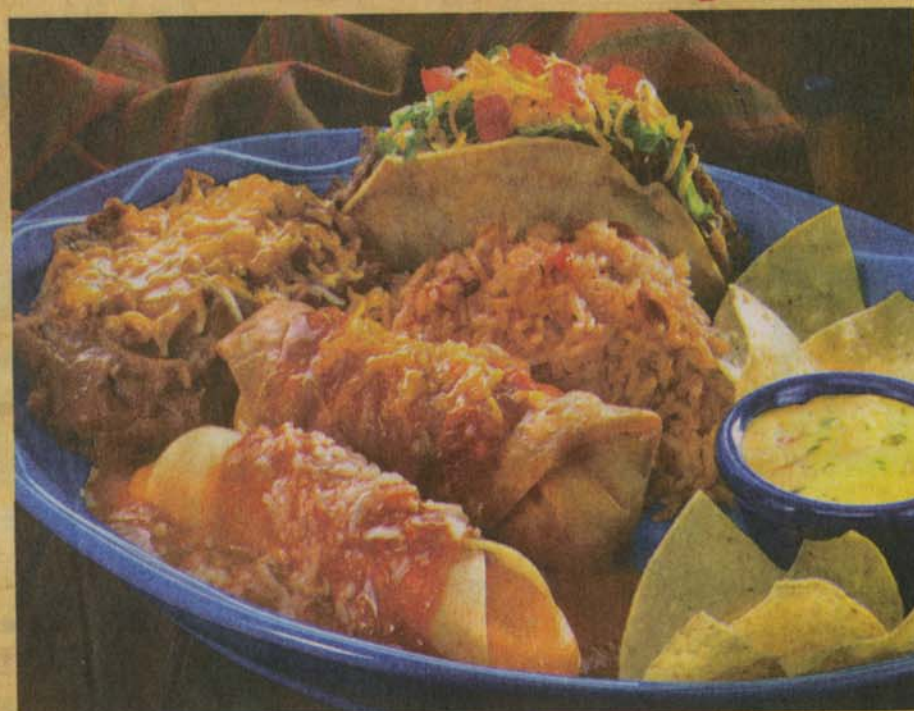
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From the Front Page

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Peter Bramley (left) and Jeff Ferst married in California but cannot legally marry in Arizona. They are now suing for the right. PAT SHANNAHAN/THE REPUBLIC

needed a unique point of law, a pressing need or a different age group.

Or a location. Jeff Ferst and Peter Bramley heard about Aiken's suit from their home in central Tucson. They had married on Valentine's Day nearly a year earlier in Palm Springs.

Bramley was married for 32 years and raised two kids. As an "ex-straight guy," he was disappointed to lose rights he once enjoyed. When the federal judge struck down Utah's marriage restrictions, Bramley decided Arizona shouldn't sit and wait any longer.

"If they could do it in Utah, we ought to be able to do it here," he said.

They called Aiken. They wanted in.

Aiken filed an amended complaint on Feb. 10 with all seven couples represented: the original four, two from Flagstaff, one from Tucson.

The complaint named county clerks as defendants because they are responsible for issuing marriage licenses. Most of the couples had trekked to the courthouse and tried to apply for a license. All were rejected, although in almost every case, the clerk was apologetic.

The state agreed with Aiken not to seek a trial in the case. Both sides filed evidence and arguments in a set of briefs over the past six months.

The final set of arguments was filed last week.

The real waiting has begun.

**On with their lives**

On the day in January when Connolly and the others sued Arizona, marriage between two men or two women was legal in 16 states and the District of Columbia. The number has since grown to 19.

In 14 other states, a judge has ruled marriage restrictions unconstitutional, rulings now on appeal. Public support has grown steadily, reaching 55 percent in May, according to Gallup. Among young people, age 18 to 29, the level of support is nearly 80 percent.

None of that has figured into the work Aiken and his lawyers have done on the Arizona case.

"I've told them from the start we could lose or we could win," Aiken says. "Every case is different. I don't think anybody in any state

could think that given the recent string of victories they could predict how the next decision will come down. To say there's a winning streak is to misread the landscape."

One or more of the cases will almost certainly land in the U.S. Supreme Court, where the lopsided series of decisions could be reversed in one vote.

The seven couples in the suit have watched the other states and are ready to celebrate if they prevail in Arizona.

Several plan to get a marriage license immediately if the judge leaves time before issuing a stay.

But their lives continue. Mason Hite and Chris Devine early this month legally adopted two more sons, Dominick, age 6, and Angel, age 5. As with Ricky, now 9, Hite is the legal father.

Meagan Metz is undergoing treatment for her lupus and still worries about what would happen if she were hospitalized away from Flagstaff, where the doctors know Natalie and allow her to stay with her wife. Both women have shaved their heads, Meagan because she was losing her hair to the treatment, Natalie in support.

Robin Reece and Renee Kaminski will wait no longer to trade legal vows. They will marry in Hawaii next month.

Joe Connolly and Terry Pochert never had kids and never tried to adopt.

The laws always favored married couples and seemed written to discourage potential gay dads.

But there was a lesbian couple in their church congregation who signed on as foster parents. Over time, they found they were better protected legally as foster moms than as adoptive moms.

That upset Connolly and Pochert.

"We could have lived our lives without filing this suit," Connolly says. He and Pochert live in a comfortable home in a gated golf course community in Maricopa. They don't go out much, preferring an ordinary life in the suburbs.

"But we see people like that couple in our church," Connolly says, "and we realized we needed to stand up for what's right."

They watched two other kids in the church over the years, a little girl and a little boy whose family became friends. The girl went to law school and began working as a lawyer. The boy is now in law school at ASU.

Ellen Aiken worked on the marriage case with her father in the early weeks, though she has since returned to her other cases. Eric continues to help.

Their father was a lawyer who had no idea what two friends would ask him that night last December in a Lutheran church, one night in the season of Advent, the season of waiting.

"We watched his kids grow up," Connolly says. He pauses. "Now they're defending us, defending our rights." He composes himself, but his eyes still glisten. "It's personal."

More online: Video and photos of the couples at [aznarratives.azcentral.com](http://aznarratives.azcentral.com).

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