

## Vermont considers same-sex marriage bill

by UPI

MONTPELIER, Vt. -- A bill to allow same-sex couples in Vermont to marry would confer benefits not given by the state's currently allowed civil unions, supporters say.

Hearings on a move to sanction same-sex marriages began Monday at the Vermont state capital in Montpelier with testimony by former state Rep. Tom Little, R-Shelburne, who said the state's landmark 2000 civil union bill lacks the full society benefits of marriage, the Barre Montpelier Times-Argus reported.

Little, who presided over the passage of the civil union law, or Act 91, nine years ago as the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, told the state Senate Judiciary Committee, "The question before this committee is if Act 91 is fulfilling its promise. Allowing same-sex couples to marry would grant them access to less tangible benefits. This would include the use of words such as marriage, wedding, marry, celebration and divorce — words that have historical, social and cultural significance."

Outside the hearing room, a crowd of opponents roared their disapproval of the same-sex marriage proposal, the newspaper said. The Rev. Craig Bensen, one of the rally's organizers, told the state senators that legalizing same-sex marriage would violate the "right of children to be raised by their biological parents."

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