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A Step Closer to Justice

New Yorkers should be proud of Gov. David Paterson's efforts to assure basic civil rights for same-sex couples married outside the state. Now, the State Legislature should prove its own commitment to equality and justice by granting gay couples the right to marry in New York State.

Mr. Paterson has directed state agencies to respond to a recent court ruling by reviewing more than 1,300 state policies that affect married people. He wants to ensure that New York fully recognizes all legal marriage licenses, including those granted to gay couples in places like Massachusetts, Canada, South Africa and soon, California.

If that sounds like mere paper shuffling in Albany, it is not. It means that New Yorkers who marry in San Francisco or Montreal can return home knowing that their rights will be protected. That is progress, especially since many states have specifically outlawed even the recognition of same-sex marriages granted legally elsewhere.

Despite the growing political outcry, Mr. Paterson is on firm legal, as well as moral, ground.

For more than a century, New York has recognized marriage contracts from other states — even if those couples could not legally marry in New York. New York does not grant licenses for common law marriages, but if such marriages are legal elsewhere, they are recognized in New York. In February, a New York State appeals court ruled unanimously that this “marriage recognition rule” also had to apply to any same-sex couple with a le-

gal marriage license obtained elsewhere.

While most Democrats in Albany have pushed for legislation to legalize gay marriage, most Republicans have argued that it is enough to adjust state laws to make them more equitable for same-sex couples. These half-measures have not worked.

The New York City Bar Association and Empire State Pride Agenda last year identified more than 1,300 aspects of New York State law that either deny rights to gay couples or make their lives far more complicated.

There are cases of one partner being denied access to a mate's hospital room. People who have spent their adult lives together without the benefit of a marriage license can be compelled to testify against each other. Benefits for survivors from workers' compensation go only to a legally recognized spouse.

After one of the most vigorous and emotional floor debates in recent Albany history, the Democratic-controlled Assembly has passed a bill allowing same-sex couples to marry in New York. The Republican-controlled Senate has refused, so far, to act.

Governor Paterson has worked hard to promote community in Albany — we fear at the cost of many essential reforms. He should use his influence with the Republican Senate leader, Joseph Bruno, to get the Assembly version of the marriage bill passed this year.

No matter their sexual orientation, New Yorkers should have the same fundamental right to marry. Governor Paterson has taken an important first step, but it is not enough. Now he needs to persuade the rest of Albany to do what is fair.

Sticker Shock and Awe at the Pentagon

A lot more spending and far too little oversight, those are the bottom lines of two disturbing new reports on the Pentagon's flawed-to-broken budgeting process. The Pentagon's inspector general plaintively reported this week that his staff is overwhelmed. For good reason. The Pentagon's budget has doubled since 2000, while the

ment” were the cryptic explanation for a \$320.8 million contract for “1,000” anonymous workers — an incredible \$320,000 per laborer. And then there was the United States Treasury check for \$5,674,075.00 paid to the Al Kasid Specialized Vehicles Trading Company in Baghdad for services the company didn't bother to describe.

Scott McC

To the Editor:

Re “In New Book Has Harsh Words for Me, May 28):

Scott McClellan is the long list of former Bush confidants disillusioned by the president's and his administration to turn away from the White House. I am sure you are right when those quotes are needed” — as Mr. McClellan puts it.

It is good that Mr. McClellan has finally realized and accepted his culpability, but I refuse to believe that “better late than never” is “better late than never” when it comes to the damage done to our nation, to our freedom, and to the lives of most of all — when it comes to the more than 4,000 fallen heroes.

Austin, Texas

The writer is a retired Army Major.

To the Editor:

I am glad that Scott McClellan has finally come clean about his role in the Bush circle, but how much better would it be instead of waiting for him to deal to be honest with the American people and women, he had spent his life since he knew the truth. He knew to Congress, to the courts, or law enforcement. He could have helped to reduce the damage to one governed by law and justice.

I, for one, cannot forgive the Bush co-participants, many books they write, and they pretend that they have no culpability. Talk is cheap, and actions speak louder than words.

St. Paul, Minn.

To the Editor:

Scott McClellan is a man who has wronged while working in the White House administration. My recent book, “The 42 Days,” is a tobacco prevention book that took 42 days to write.

Two weeks of this tobacco prevention chocolate Lab, and I slept in my little pickup truck for three times the temperature freezing. Like long-distance truckers, I took truck-stop showers.

My living circumstances are not the norm. I am a self-hired-health-gun, but I am proud to have paid for doing what I believe is right.

Advocacy and N

To the Editor:

Re “Tax Exemption Face New Challenge”