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## The right to wed

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Seize the moment, New York. Same-sex marriage, not long ago on the whimsical side of the politics of the possible, could soon enough be legal here, just as it is in five other states.

It's no surprise, surely, that the state Assembly has voted yet again to make it legal for gay couples to wed. What is more significant is the margin, 89 to 52. That's four more proponents and nine fewer opponents in the 150-member Assembly than there were two years ago. Polls show public opposition eroding, too. A Siena College poll last month found a majority of 53 percent of New Yorkers, still within the margin of error, in favor of gay marriage.

Civil rights slowly advance. Two of the assemblymen who have come around on the issue since 2007 are from the Capital Region — Tim Gordon, an independent from Bethlehem, and Bob Reilly, a Democrat from Colonie.

"Change takes time," Mr. Gordon says.

For Assemblywoman Janet Duprey, a North Country Republican who also opposed gay marriage in 2007, such change is all about equal rights for her lesbian neighbors.

Sure, there are still holdouts, such as Assemblymen Michael Fitzpatrick, a Long Island Republican who says same-sex marriage is morally wrong.

What's missing in the larger debate, though, is a compelling argument against gay marriage as an essential and overdue extension of civil rights. Why does President Obama, for instance, prefer civil unions instead, when they fail to provide all the rights that married couples have?

Where's the political extremism in the cause of gay marriage that some opponents allege?

In New York, what precisely is the slippery slope that Assemblyman James Tedisco, a Schenectady Republican, fears? Where are the similarities between gay marriage and polygamy that he alleges?

Such questions now will be asked of the state senators who oppose same-sex marriage but have been spared from voting on it.

The new majority leader, Malcolm Smith, a Queens Democrat, wants a vote on same-sex marriage, once he has a majority in favor of it.

The switch in positions by several Assembly members ought to encourage Mr. Smith. Someone, we'd think, will stand up in the Senate, just as Daniel O'Donnell, a Manhattan Democrat, did in the Assembly and say, "I'm entitled to the same paper you have."

Would the Senate really stop someone from marrying a person to whom they've been engaged, as Mr. O'Donnell has been, for 28 years?

We can't help but think New York is more enlightened than that.