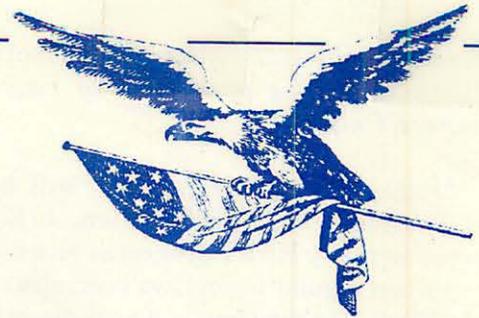


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ACTION UPDATE



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\$10 CERTIFICATE CAN CREATE A "FAMILY"

People seeking to be recognized as a family unit can now register with the California Secretary of State under a creative system that some say could benefit thousands of homosexual couples. For a \$10 filing fee, any group of people can receive a certificate bearing the State seal which declares the household an association called the "Family of [Name]." Although no tax or legal benefits appear to accompany the designation, it might help "domestic partners" obtain hospital visiting rights and serve as a psychological boost. The certificates might also be shown to health clubs, frequent flier programs, and insurance companies to help qualify for "family discounts," says Thomas Coleman, an attorney who conceived the idea of such registrations. Coleman has also served on several government task forces on changing family configurations in California and the nation. March Fong Eu, the Secretary of State, declared the concept "a creative and valid use of existing law."

In registering, "families" declare themselves to be "unincorporated non-profit associations" under an existing section of the California Corporations Code that is now used by such groups as fraternities, garden clubs and homeowners associations. If successful, according to some commentators, the registrations could substitute for the often controversial ballot measures promoted by homosexual and lesbian groups to register their "marriages" at city hall. Groups supporting traditional family values have requested lawmakers to investigate the impact of the registrations and to consider more clearly defining the law to maintain the integrity of the traditional family.