



Presentation of Thomas F. Coleman
to the Finance Committee of the Board of Regents

University of California / May 16, 2002

Unmarried University Employees Deserve Full Benefits and Fair Treatment

My name is Thomas F. Coleman. I am the executive director of the American Association for Single People.

AASP is the nation's leading provider of information and resources for unmarried and single Americans, whether they live with a family member or partner, a roommate, or alone. We are a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization, with headquarters in Glendale, California.

The issue of "equal pay for equal work" is an ongoing concern to AASP because it is of interest to so many unmarried Americans. Forty percent of the nation's workforce is unmarried. Part of AASP's mission is to encourage and promote the fair treatment of all employees regardless of their marital status.

My remarks today focus primarily on the three pension reform proposals made by President Richard Atkinson: items [503](#), [504](#), and [505](#). AASP supports all three of these proposals because they recognize that equity in benefits compensation is a matter of basic fairness – and equal benefits should not depend on marital status, gender, or sexual orientation. By adopting these three proposals, you will create a greater degree of fairness in the University's Retirement Plan.

I also call to your attention a section of the President's report on item 504 which discusses the possible [inclusion of opposite-sex domestic partners](#) in the University's health benefits plan. Since 1997, AASP has been communicating with the Board of Regents about the health plan, urging the Regents to include all domestic partners, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Opposite-sex domestic partners are currently excluded from the health plan. We hope that in the near future you will allow employees to obtain health benefits for an opposite-sex domestic partner.

I recently wrote to each of you about [Vic Pelton](#), a retiree of the University of California and a member of AASP. Vic currently cannot obtain health benefits for Jean Lovetang, his partner of 18 years, even though they are registered as domestic partners with the Secretary of State. We urge you to remedy this by making all opposite-sex domestic partners eligible for health benefits.

The meeting here today is discussed in the [cover story](#) of our upcoming June newsletter. The University of California Retirement Plan is a part of our ongoing focus on how unmarried workers fare under public and private retirement plans.

Presentation to UC Regents
Full and Fair Retirement Benefits
May 16, 2002

As you deliberate and vote on the three proposals before you today, I encourage you to keep several principles and key facts in mind:

- * Equal pay for equal work should be the bedrock principle on which all benefits plans are built.
- * An employee's compensation, including benefits, should hinge on merit, productivity, and loyalty, and not on the marital status of the employees or whether their family structures conform to a traditional model based on the way most people lived in the 1950s.
- * Unmarried employees who live alone, who live with unmarried relatives, or who have domestic partners, should not be paid less than married workers who do the same job.
- * The right of privacy in the California Constitution protects the freedom of choice to marry or not to marry. Employees should not be rewarded or penalized for how they exercise that choice.
- * Family diversity is now the norm. The "Ozzie and Harriet" nuclear family form is currently only one of many types of family structures. The University's health and pension plans should show respect for family diversity.
- * Most employers in the nation which have adopted domestic partner benefits programs have created inclusive and gender neutral plans open to all unmarried couples, same and opposite sex partners alike.
- * Just last week, bills were passed in Connecticut and New York which show a growing trend toward inclusiveness. The Legislature in the State of Connecticut has made basic legal and humanitarian protections available to all unmarried adults, not just same-sex couples. The New York Legislature has authorized 9-11 survivor funds to go to all surviving domestic partners, not just same-sex survivors.

In closing, I commend President Atkinson for proposing these changes in the retirement plan and for raising the possibility of extending health benefits to all domestic partner in the near future. The Academic Senate should also be commended for recommending pension equity for all unmarried employees, including all domestic partners.

Finally, it is encouraging that, ever since the Board of Regents voted to extend health benefits to same-sex partners in 1997, you have continued to explore ways to bring more fairness into the benefits compensation system. Achieving equity is an ongoing process.

I urge you to adopt all three proposals before you today. Bring pension equity to University employees whose needs are currently not being met. Create equity for all your faculty and staff.

By adopting items 503, 504, and 505, you will send a clear signal to University employees, and to the public, that the promise of equality belongs to everyone regardless of marital status.