

Unmarried America



Newsletter of the AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR SINGLE PEOPLE

National USA Week: September 15-21, '02

National Unmarried and Single Americans Week, formerly commemorated by AASP as "National Singles Week," begins this year on September 15.

National USA Week is a time to celebrate the lives and contributions of unmarried Americans as valuable employees, dutiful taxpayers, good neighbors, community volunteers, and loving family members.

There are commemorative days, weeks, and even months, for parents, secretaries, women, racial and ethnic minorities, and others. It is only fitting that 82 million unmarried and single Americans be recognized in such a manner too.

AASP is planning a variety of activities for National USA Week, including a Speakers Bureau, appearances on radio talk shows, interviews with newspaper feature and lifestyle writers, stopping by the offices of each member of Congress, and conferring awards to single people who are great role models, as well as to elected officials for positive leadership and to members of the media for excellence in reporting.

You can help us secure a proclamation from the mayor of your city acknowledging USA Week in your area.

For more details on what you can do to participate in these events, visit our website at:

www.nationalUSAweek.org

Unmarried Workers Question Pension Plans



younger workers. Being able to own up to one-third of their contributions would mean they could designate a beneficiary to receive those assets if they were to die before retiring. A surviving domestic partner, parent, or adult child might desperately need such a financial boost for economic survival.

"Unmarried workers sue state, say retirement law discriminates" was the headline of a story in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on August 3, 1999.

The article explained that Secretary of State Douglas LaFollette and other state employees were suing Wisconsin over a state law that discriminated against workers who are not married.

The law being challenged only allowed spouses or dependents of state workers to receive full retirement benefits if an employee died before retiring. But if the employee's designated beneficiary is not a spouse or dependent, the employer's contributions to the retirement fund are forfeited.

LaFollette has since become a member of AASP.

A similar complaint was recently raised by an AASP member who works for American Airlines (see story, page 12).

A preliminary investigation by AASP has found that forfeiture of employer contributions to traditional pension plans is a problem faced by many employees working for both public and private employers.

The problem is compounded by the fact that unmarried employees who die before retirement also forfeit all contributions made by them and by their employers to Social Security. That is why proposals to partially privatize social security look attractive to many

The issue of pension equity for government workers was taken up by the Regents of the University of California at their meeting on May 16, 2002. University administrators presented the Regents with proposals to eliminate marital status discrimination in the university's pension system.

AASP Executive Director, Thomas F. Coleman, appeared at the hearing. He advised the Regents that it was time to reassess U.C. health benefits as well as pension benefits.

AASP member Vic Pelton, a retiree of the university, is still waiting for the Regents to open up the same-sex-only domestic partner health benefits plan to heterosexual domestic partners.

"Equal pay for equal work should be the bedrock principle on which all benefits plans operate," Coleman said. "An employee's overall compensation, including benefits pay, should hinge on merit, productivity, and loyalty."

"Unmarried employees who live alone, who live with unmarried relatives, or who have domestic partners, should not be second-class workers," Coleman stressed. "They are currently shortchanged by the pension plan."

AASP will keep pension benefits discrimination on its long-term agenda and make periodic reports to our members on further developments. This is an issue which sorely needs attention. **AAA**

We're Building a Team for Unmarried America

For the past three years, AASP has been building a team for Unmarried America - a group of people who believe that the promise of equality applies to everyone regardless of marital status.



Individual Members

We started with a small number of founding members in a few states. Today we have members in every part of the nation. Individual donors are the core of our organization.

Elected Officials

Only a few political leaders supported AASP when we started in 1999. Today, our members include federal, state, and local officials from coast to coast. In April 2002 alone, more than 20 elected officials joined AASP. Momentum is building!

Book Authors

In recent years there has been a flood of books published for and about unmarried and single people on a wide variety of topics. Many authors of these books have joined AASP to lend support to our cause.

College Interns

Although not enough young adults are voting these days, there is no shortage of enthusiastic volunteers for worthy causes. The influx of students doing unpaid internships at AASP demonstrates that young people do identify with our mission.

Academic Advisors

We are building a Board of Academic Advisors through Spectrum Institute, the research and policy division of AASP. A steering committee of several university professors is meeting to make plans.

Media

When AASP was launched in 1999, the story of Unmarried America was not being told. We have reached out to journalists and producers with facts, issues, and real life examples. Today the media is telling our stories and in the process are educating the public and policy makers alike.

Nonprofit Groups

We are building alliances with civic and membership groups. National Volunteer organizations, such as Connect America and Points of Light Foundation, have welcomed AASP as a community partner. Let us know about nonprofit groups in your area with which we might develop a relationship.

What You Can Do

There are several ways in which you can help us build a broader and more effective team for Unmarried America.

Join AASP

If you are not already a member of AASP, please join today. We need your support in order to be effective in our educational programs and our advocacy. Make a tax deductible donation of \$10 or more and become a part of this team.

Renew Membership

If you are a member but have not made a tax-deductible donation to AASP during the last year, please take a moment to send us a check or make a donation by credit card by mail, phone, or website.

Increase Donations

The minimum donation of \$10 is barely enough to cover our costs in producing and mailing you our quarterly newsletters. Join the ranks of many of our members who donate \$25, \$50, or \$100 per year to support our organization.

Gift Memberships

Many of our members have given their friends or relatives a gift membership in AASP. This would be a good way to remember someone who is special to you and to introduce AASP to them.

Spread the Word

Share the newsletter with others, or send e-mails to friends letting them know about our website. They will be glad to hear there is a group like AASP for unmarried and single Americans.

Honorary Memberships

Send us the names and addresses of unmarried elected officials in your area. Nominate them for an honorary membership in AASP.

Corporate Sponsorship

Businesses can gain positive visibility with unmarried consumers by sponsoring an AASP program, a newsletter mailing, or a website page. Give us a tip and we'll contact the business you suggest. ∆∆∆

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American Association for Single People

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College Student Interns Are Making a Difference at AASP

An influx of university students and recent college graduates has greatly enhanced the programs at AASP.

With limited budget and staff, but with a strong desire to enhance our existing programs and add some new ones too, we decided to reach out to college students to apply for work-study internships with us.

Thanks to a service provided by MonsterTrack.com, which offers free internship job postings to nonprofits, we soon were deluged with resumes from college students and graduates



who were eager for experience.

We hired several applicants and have been very pleased with their

performance.

Some interns have provided artistic talents or technical skills. Others have helped with research projects or developing new programs.

The interns have also been excited about the ability to perform services which will make a difference. It is a win-win situation for everyone.

Upon leaving AASP, they can add us to their resume and give us as a job reference. And the staff is energized by their creative ideas and fresh perspectives on life. ▲▲▲



Jeff Brooker, Occidental College, Graduated 2002 (Administration)



Kat Ross, Occidental College, Graduates 2003 (Administration)



Michelle Tai, Carnegie Mellon, Graduated 2001 (Development)



Raquel Atienza, Cal. State Northridge, Graduated 2002 (Graphic Artist)



Sheila Amaya, Cal. State Pomona, Graduated 2002 (Information Technology)



Thanh Quach, Cal. State Long Beach, Graduates 2003 (Website Design)

Victory in Virginia While Other AASP Members Seek Equality in New York

The following are three letters recently received by AASP from members. The first is a thank you from Virginia resident, Darlene Davis. The others are from members in New York about the denial of domestic partner health benefits for opposite-sex partners.

AASP came to the assistance of Davis last year when we wrote a legal brief in her case.

In the other two cases, we have privately given the members advice on several steps they could take to convince their employers to create more inclusive and gender-neutral benefits programs.

Daycare License Granted



For the past 30 years, I have dedicated my life to in home daycare. I live in Norfolk, VA and am licensed by the state of Virginia. I have been licensed for nearly twenty five years.

In June of 2001, the state of Virginia Licensing Department saw fit to deny renewal of my daycare license, due to the fact that I have a live-in companion. He has been registered with the State of Virginia on my daycare license for sixteen years.

In June of 2001, the Licensing Department decided he could no longer live in my home if I maintained the daycare there. The daycare is my sole means of support and with no license, I could not afford to keep my home. I stood to lose all I had worked for over the past 40 years. I decided to fight for my rights.

During the next couple of weeks, I received help from the (ACLU) American Civil Liberties Union and was made an honorary member of The American Association for Single People. Mr. Thomas F. Coleman, Executive Director, wrote a powerful letter to Mr. Charles Ingram, Executive Director of Virginia's Licensing Department.

In his effort to plead my case, he noted that the 1877 anti-cohabitation law, which the denial was based on was unconstitutional. His concern was that it would have an effect on other unmarried adults who have business or professional licenses in Virginia.

I feel that his letter had a great impact on my case. I am very thankful for the concerns of the Association and their faith in me and my case.

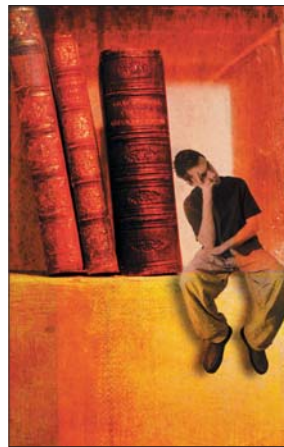
On March 15, 2002, I received my renewed daycare license. No explanation from the state.

I would like to thank the American Association for Single People and Mr. Coleman for their support. I look forward to being a member of the Association.

On behalf of the children in Davis Daycare, my staff, myself and my companion, Thank You. Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Darlene K. Davis
Norfolk, Virginia

Bookstore Limits Benefits



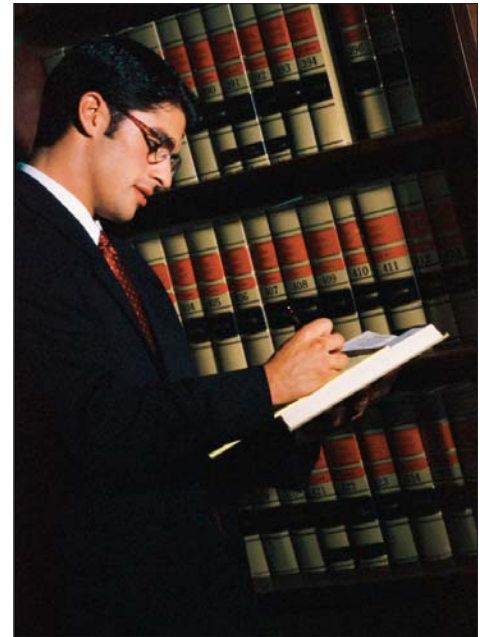
would be covered.

Right now, I work for a major bookstore chain and they only cover gay partners. I am not sure how to obtain benefits for my partner.

I appreciate any suggestions you may give on the matter. I live in New York and cannot find any specific case law on the subject here.

John
New York City

Law Firm Won't Budge



I am an attorney employed by a law firm in New York. My union bargains with management to set salary, benefits, etc.

I have a female domestic partner and together we have a child. The child is covered under my family policy but my partner is not.

She formerly worked for the same firm and we are currently making huge COBRA payments as we have done for some time.

The law firm receives city, state and federal funding for the work we do. The company provides health benefits to same-sex domestic partners but not opposite-sex.

We have philosophical and religious reasons behind our position not to get married. The union's lawyer says we don't have a case and, even if we did, it would not be pursuant to the union contract.

I disagree with his reasoning and more importantly think that he has no concern for the rights of people who decide not to get married.

Do we have grounds and how can I research it further? Is this a case that AASP is interested in?

Jim
New York City

Unmarried Relatives Don't Qualify for Some 'Family Friendly' Workplace Policies



The following two letters were received by AASP from workers complaining that their employers are favoring traditional husband-wife-child families over other family living arrangements.

AASP advocates for workplace policies which are fair to all employees regardless of marital status or family configuration. These two letters are a reminder that many employers need to take a close look at their personnel policies.

Employers can create work environments which are friendly and fair to unmarried and married workers, those with and without children, and employees who live with or care for relatives.

Let us know of your experiences at work. Is your employer fair to unmarried workers, or have you had experiences similar to these folks?

QUESTION:

Why No Flexibility for My Need to Care for My Elderly Dad?



I am 53 and single with no children. I am now in the position where I need to be the sole caregiver of my 84 year old father. He does not drive.

For two years after my mother died, I tried to manage taking care of him from my home 15 miles away. That meant cleaning two houses, taking care

of two yards, picking up prescriptions, grocery shopping for him and myself, taking him to all doctor appointments, and anything else he might need. In addition to this, I held down a full time hourly job.

After two exhausting years of this, I finally decided to sell my home and move in with him.

My father had triple bypass and artery surgery simultaneously a couple of years ago. Naturally, his health goes in peaks and valleys.

My employer complained when I needed to take him to more doctor's appointments than I originally scheduled him for. Would this have been a problem if he were my child? Probably not.

I had accumulated many hours of sick time; however, I was not allowed to use it to take him to doctors appointments.

Employees with children were allowed to use their sick time to take them to appointments and to stay with them if they were sick. I was told to use my vacation time or be docked my pay for his appointments. I felt this was discriminatory so when my father had a doctors appointment, I just called in sick and took the whole day off. (The company I work for has over 50 employees.)

Now I see that the Senate Family Services Committee has approved legislation whereby employees could be entitled to use their accumulated sick leave to care for an ill child, parent or spouse. This is how it should be.

This same company whined when I wouldn't bring my father to their "family picnic." They wouldn't recognize my father as being family, yet I live with him and have no other family within 1800 miles to take care of him in my absence. I didn't realize I was an orphan all these years just because I was unmarried and childless.

Who can I contact to help get this bill passed? I would appreciate any help you can give me.

Kate

QUESTION:

Why Can't I Take Mom and Sister to Company Events?



I work for a loan servicing company. For many years this company has allowed married employees to bring their wives and as many children as they have to company events such as the annual company picnic.

But when a single employee, like myself wants to bring his dependents, which in this case are my 60-year-old mother and 18 year-old sister, the company refuses to treat them as my family and refuses to pay for any participation in company functions, including the Christmas party.

Single employees in the company have always feared upper management but I after 5 years of working for this company I have had enough!

What can I do? I am also afraid of getting fired as I do love my work and need my job.

Ray

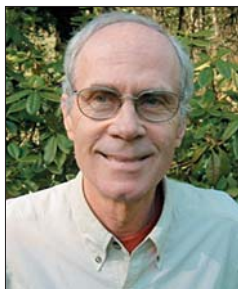
AASP RESPONSE:

Many employees are afraid to speak up for fear of retaliation. If there is no union, these workers often suffer in silence for years.

In such cases, a letter or telephone call from an outside agency might cause the employer to reevaluate restrictive and unfair policies such as these. The agency could write a generic letter of inquiry, without using the employees name or other identifying information.

The outside agency could be a minister or a seniors group. It might even be a local or state elected official. In appropriate cases, AASP would write a letter for a member who can't solve the problem alone.

Surge of State and Local Elected Officials Joining AASP



Douglas LaFollette
Wisconsin
Secretary of State
Democrat



Rhine L. McLin
Dayton, Ohio
Mayor
Democrat



Vilma Colom
Chicago, Illinois
Alderman
Democrat



Winfred Dukes
Georgia
State Representative
Democrat



Neil G. Giuliano
Tempe, Arizona
Mayor
Republican



Steve Vaillancourt
New Hampshire
State Representative
Libertarian



Rocky Nichols
Kansas
State Representative
Democrat



Jewell Williams
Pennsylvania
State Representative
Democrat



Salima Siler Marriott
Maryland
State Delegate
Democrat



Edwin Murray
Louisiana
State Representative
Democrat



Dale C. Severson
North Dakota
State Representative
Republican



Donald G. Preister
Nebraska
State Senator
Independent



Gwen Welshimer
Kansas
State Representative
Democrat



Joe Towns, Jr.
Tennessee
State Representative
Democrat



Mary Murphy
Minnesota
State Representative
Democrat



Shirley Nathan-Pulliam
Maryland House of Delegates

April 3, 2002

Thomas F. Coleman
Executive Director
American Association for Single People

Dear Mr. Coleman:

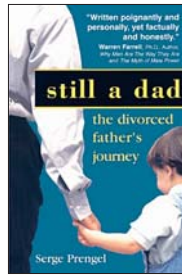
Thank you for sending me your newsletter, Unmarried America, and your invitation to become an honorary member. I agree that equality is to be afforded to everyone regardless of their marital status.

Your organization, advocating in their best interests for healthcare, job benefits, and fairness in taxation, is providing an important voice for the growing number of unmarried individuals.

By statistical analysis, the majority of our households will be headed by single and unmarried adults. Their needs and concerns need to be addressed.

You may add my name to the list of honorary members and I look forward to keeping in touch with you on issues of concern.

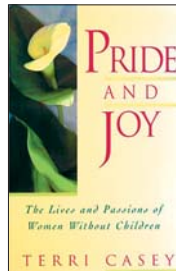
Meet Our New Book Author Members



Still a Dad: The Divorced Father's Journey

by Serge Prenzel

This book takes a close look at gender stereotypes in child custody disputes. Karen DeCrow, past president of NOW, finds it to be an intelligent, entertaining and useful book.



Pride and Joy: The Lives and Passions of Women Without Children

by Terri Casey

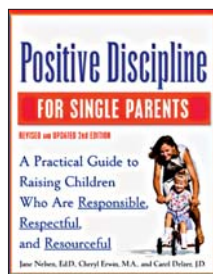
This book contains a collection of 25 profiles of women who have chosen not to have children. Their stories dispel the myth that women must have children to be happy.



Good Intentions Gone Awry: No Fault Divorce and the American Family

by Allen Parkman

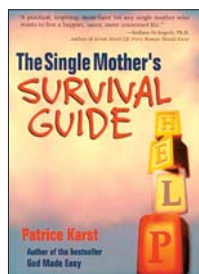
This book addresses the repercussions of no-fault divorce, first identifying the problems which the author attributes to no-fault divorce, and then offers a program for divorce-law reform.



Positive Discipline for Single Parents

by Carol Delzer

This book focuses on raising children with nonpunitive discipline, through clear communication techniques and child-positive approaches to problem solving. It provides solutions, solace, and respite for parents trying to raise kids on their own without losing their minds.



The Single Mother's Survival Guide

by Patrice Karst

This book offers practical yet witty advice, covering a wide range of topics that concern the modern woman struggling without a mate. It features dozens of quick "survival checklists" on topics such as dealing with exhaustion and reasons to be happy about being a single mom.

Insurance Commissioners Should Review Marital Status Pricing and Surcharges

Jeff Brooker was recently searching for automobile insurance. Brooker, an intern working at AASP, is 24 years old.

When Brooker received a price quote from Mercury Insurance, he asked if other discounts were available besides the good-driver discount for which Brooker qualified.

The agent told Brooker the only way he could reduce the price further would be if Brooker got married.

Brooker, who is both single and gay, wondered how he could ever qualify since same-sex marriage is not allowed. He also wondered how a brother and sister who live together could qualify since they too cannot marry each other. And why should a heterosexual couple who can marry be forced to do so to get a discount?

Auto insurance discrimination is not limited to young men such as Brooker. Some companies will not allow unmarried adults who live together to buy a joint policy for two cars to gain a multi-car discount.



Garamendi and Coleman release marital status report in 1993

This problem was addressed by an Anti-Discrimination Task Force convened by Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi in 1993. After studying marital status discrimination in many types of insurance, the Task Force issued a report which highlighted the comments Southern California AAA (see box in right column, this page). The report concluded:

"Consumers should not be economically rewarded or punished on the basis of a decision to marry or not to marry. Marital status discrimination should be treated for what it is – a violation of the fundamental right of privacy protected by the California Constitution."

The report of the Insurance Commissioner's Task Force was written by Thomas F. Coleman, who is now Executive Director of AASP.



Garamendi and Coleman discuss marital status bias again in 2002

Coleman and Garamendi met recently to discuss this ongoing problem. Garamendi is again running for Insurance Commissioner this year.

In some states, such as Montana, marital status discrimination in auto insurance is prohibited. Last year, the Legislature in Montana defeated an insurance-company-sponsored bill to legalize marital status pricing.

The issue has been brewing in Canada since 1992 when the Canadian Supreme Court ordered insurance companies to find alternative ways to assess risk. The court found that stereotyping of young males on the basis of marital status, while not absolutely illegal, was possibly a violation of the Ontario Human Rights Code. (*Zurich Ins. Co. v. Ontario Human Rights Commission*).

The court ruled that the mere fact that there is a statistical correlation between marital status and insurance losses does not fully satisfy the law's human rights values which cannot be overridden by business expediency alone. To allow discrimination simply on the basis of statistical averages would only serve to perpetuate traditional stereotypes with all their invidious prejudices. It is necessary therefore to consider whether there is a practical alternative in the circumstances.

Since there was no evidence before

the court that other reasonable criteria could be used as an alternative, the court dismissed the case. But it challenged the industry to come up with such criteria.

The issue recently surfaced in Canada again when the Ontario Human Rights Commission issued a report in February 2002 in which Chief Commissioner Keith Norton stated, "It is time to give serious consideration to human rights issues in insurance."

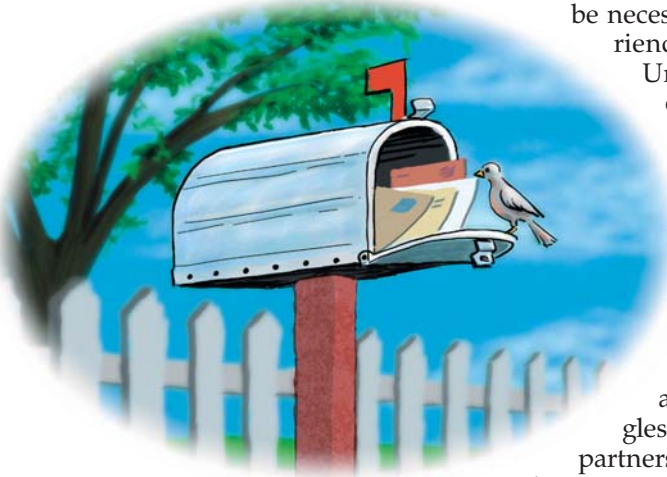
The report urged the insurance industry to find alternative rating criteria which do not use class stereotyping based on marital status.

Insurance Commissioners in the United States should issue a similar challenge to companies operating in this country. It's time for a review.

"Historically, insurers have found that for some lines of insurance, particularly auto insurance, married couples generated lower losses than single persons and have priced rates accordingly. Many speculate that it is lifestyle, rather than strictly marital status, that is responsible for the difference in loss costs and suggest that insurers should explore the use of lifestyle characteristics rather than simply rely on marital status as a pricing factor. This change in philosophy and insurance pricing would address most of the concerns (raised in the Garamendi-Coleman anti-discrimination report). The Exchange does not base rates on marital status, but we believe that lifestyle and similar characteristics are legitimate and reliable indicators of risk and should be allowed as insurance rating factors."

Alice Bisnow, Interinsurance Exchange of the Auto Club of Southern California (AAA)

Mail Box



Some responses to our story on Singles Ministries

I want to thank you for your article in the March issue about single people and the ministry that an evangelical Christian group is working on for single people. I found that bias against or misunderstanding of single people crosses many denominational boundaries.

I hope that all types of religious groups keep this issue in mind. They all have certainly improved since the days I heard that a small Baptist church did not know how to deal with an older single gentleman and had him in Sunday school with the kids because their adult class was for couples, but there still needs to be improvement.

Between my experience and single friends' experiences we have found that singles have a hard time finding a place in some churches and other religious organizations. A Jewish friend said that she visited a synagogue with an interest in joining and everything was so family oriented that she felt excluded. I did not have as much problem in the Baptist church I belonged to but there still was not much place for a single adult woman, living by herself and since this was so outside their culture, they had a hard time understanding what I was doing.

One would think that the more liberal religions would have more place for singles but I have not found this to

be necessarily true. The best experience I had was in the Unitarian Universalist church I belonged to. I have found that the alternative religions vary in quality of ministry to singles.

I hope that religious groups can learn from what the Assembly of God is attempting to do in its singles ministry and also remember that a singles ministry is not to help find partners for the single people in their congregation but to celebrate that all people are individuals with individual needs. Not all people are or desire to be couples.

Linda Robinett
Ridgecrest, CA



Thank you for publishing the article on our singles ministries in your publication. It is greatly appreciated.

If there is anything that I can ever do, just let me know.

Reaching Single America,
Dennis Franck
Director, Single Adult Ministries
Assemblies of God

Tip to AASP causes change on website of bed & breakfast inn

My husband and I recently booked a weekend stay at a bed and breakfast in Oregon. While looking at the website, we discovered the following paragraph: "To avoid confusion and disappointment, please state the names of all persons in your party. Small conference groups, business persons, singles, married couples, and families will be most welcome. Unmarried couples will feel uncomfortable."

This seems highly discriminatory towards unmarried heterosexual couples as well as homosexual couples ... maybe even illegal. Needless to say I have since canceled the reservation and plan to write them an email on why. I still feel inclined to forward this on to another organization ... any ideas?? Am I being overly sensitive??? My husband found it offensive as well.

Julie B.

AASP sent the following e-mail to the owner of the bed & breakfast:

Your website states: "Unmarried couples will feel uncomfortable."

Why would that be so? How would anyone know if two people were married or not? Does this warning apply to same-sex couples as well?

We just can't imagine why such a statement would be made, except, of course, to discourage unmarried couples from patronizing your establishment. But why would you take such a course of action, especially since marital status discrimination is illegal in housing accommodations in Oregon?



The manager replied:

I spent all afternoon trying to find that statement and finally did. I will have the web designer eliminate it as soon as I can get him to change it. Thank you for the information.

We later checked the website and confirmed that the offensive sentence was removed.

Secretaries of State Want More "New Millennium" Young Adults to Vote



The Census Bureau recently reported that the lowest voting rate for any age group is for 18-24 year-old citizens. Only 36 percent of these young adults, most of whom are single, voted in the 2000 elections.

The picture was even worse in 1998, when fewer than 20 percent of 18-24 year olds bothered to vote. This kind of record low turnout among young voters gave state election officials cause for alarm, so they decided to go searching for answers.

The National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) conducted a national, non-partisan study in 1998, which revealed that young people, ages 18-24, are dropping out of the electoral process for a number of reasons:

- they feel ignored by politicians,
- they feel their vote doesn't count,
- they feel they lack information.

The study results released February 10, 1999, by NASS also included other troubling findings: Most young people in this country are highly critical of the quality of civics education they receive in public schools, and they think most politicians are dishonest.

Officials at NASS say, "Now that we know what we're up against, we're focusing on ways to bring about change."

New Millennium Project is a national youth voter campaign designed by NASS to encourage political and civic participation in people ages 18-24. Their 1998 study showed that traditional motivational strategies aren't working well with this age group. That is why the New Millennium Project is looking for creative and participatory solutions to provide the nation's young people with

the information and skills they need to become motivated, educated, and informed citizens.

Goals of the Project are to:

- Improve voter turnout rates among 18-to-24-year-olds and enable young voters to make informed choices.
- Help provide strategies and messages for getting young people engaged in political and civic participation.
- Promote civics education in schools.
- Raise public awareness about the importance of youth involvement in government.

"A lot of young people say they don't vote because politicians don't pay attention to them. Meanwhile, politicians don't address young people because they don't vote. It's a cycle that needs to be broken."

— Report of NASS

AASP believes that young people might be more inclined to vote if political parties and candidates discussed issues which affect their well being such as marital status discrimination in employment, housing, and insurance.

Politicians could address the issue of affordable auto and health insurance in the context of the single individual and not merely as a family issue.

Groups can become an official partner of the New Millennium Project by contacting NASS at: (202) 624-3525 or its website at: www.nass.org.

New Millennium Fact Sheet



The "New Millennium Generation" is comprised of 18-24-year-olds, including 70.2 million Americans age 20 or younger. 1 in 3 is not Caucasian.

It is the largest generation of young people in our country's history, surpassing the Baby Boom Generation.

In 1998, fewer than one in five 18-to-24-year-olds bothered to vote.

The single factor that most determines whether a young person will vote is whether his or her parents vote. Age and education are also factors.

46% of the young people surveyed by the Project said they never or almost never talked about politics, government, or current events with their parents.

They're busy! 38% of the young people who didn't register to vote said they "didn't have time."

A majority of young people in this study were not motivated to vote out of habit, duty, guilt, or the fear of what would happen to our democracy.

Young people look at volunteerism as the way to make a difference because it involves tangible results and a personal outcome. More than half (53%) of 18-24 year-olds volunteer on a regular basis.

94% of survey respondents defined the most important part of citizenship as "helping others."

Two main reasons young people give for not voting are: they don't think their vote makes a difference (26%), and they don't have enough information (25%).

55% say schools don't do a good job of giving young people the information and basic skills they need to vote.

Our Programs Are Designed With You in Mind

Who we serve

Unmarried Individuals. About 27 million Americans live alone. While families are important to society and to the nation, so are individuals who work hard, pay taxes, vote, and contribute to their communities.

Unmarried Couples. About 12 million adults live with an unmarried partner. Government and businesses should not treat domestic partners as legal strangers. These families deserve basic legal protections and equitable economic benefits.

Unmarried Relatives. Millions of other unmarried adults live with relatives in households without minor children. "Family friendly" policies, in the workplace or by the government, should not ignore or exclude unmarried adult family relationships.

Unmarried Workers. All workers deserve "equal pay for equal work" regardless of marital status or family status. Equal benefits compensation should apply to workers who live with a relative, a partner, or live alone.

Unmarried Consumers. Insurance companies, landlords, and retail and service oriented businesses should be fair to all customers. Consumers should not be penalized on account of their marital status.

Unmarried Taxpayers. Unmarried workers pay a disproportionate share of income and social security taxes, but receive fewer benefits than married people. Estate taxes exempt a surviving spouse but can take as much as 50 percent of the estate of an unmarried person. Tax codes should be marital status neutral.

Unmarried Voters. Political parties and candidates usually reach out to married couples and to parents with children but they ignore solo singles, domestic partners, and unmarried families without children. Party platforms and campaign outreach should include unmarried Americans. We are more than 35 percent of voters nationally.

What we do

Advice & Resources. We provide advice and resources – financial, legal, health, travel, books – for solo singles, domestic partners, single parents, single women, and others. You won't find information and referrals as comprehensive as this anywhere else on the internet.

Website. We report current news that directly concerns unmarried people. We let our members know about pending legislation which could affect their lives or pocketbooks. New book releases and interesting essays are also found on our website.

Newsletter. We publish a quarterly newsletter for our members to keep them informed of our progress as we promote equal rights for them as taxpayers, workers, and consumers.

Media Outreach. Favorable public opinion is essential to any equal rights campaign. This often depends on how the media portrays us. We work with reporters, journalists, and producers to create media products which are fair and balanced.

Research & Policy. Spectrum Institute, our research and policy division, analyzes academic studies about single people. We also assist elected officials as they conduct studies and publish policy reports on issues of concern to unmarried Americans.

Awards Program. To acknowledge leadership and excellence, we give awards to individuals and organizations who have helped unmarried Americans in some significant way: elected officials, corporate executives, and members of the media.

Counseling & Intervention. In appropriate cases, we may counsel members who are experiencing unfair treatment. If warranted, we will write a letter or file a brief proposing a solution to the problem.

Mission Statement

The American Association for Single People promotes the well being and fair treatment of 82 million unmarried Americans, whether they live with a family member or partner, a roommate, or live alone. The promise of equality applies to all people – as workers, taxpayers, consumers, and citizens – whether married or not. AASP's mission is fulfilled by conducting research and providing information and advice to members, elected officials, corporate policy makers, and the media.

✓ DONATE / JOIN

Yes, I want to help AASP create a better future for unmarried Americans.

Here is my tax-deductible donation for:

\$10 \$25 \$50 _____

check credit card

card no _____

expiration date _____

I am renewing my membership.

I am joining as a new member.

I am giving a gift membership to:

Name of donor of gift membership or person renewing existing membership.

Name _____

New member's name:

Address _____

Apt _____ Phone (____) _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

e-mail _____

With a donation of \$25 or more you receive an AASP key chain with mini-pen built in. With \$50 you get an AASP t-shirt or sweat shirt. Let us know your size. We do not share our mailing list with outside sources.

See page two for our address.

Airlines Differ on Retirement Plans for Employees 'Flying Solo'



AASP recently received the following letter from a member who works for American Airlines as a flight attendant.

As a result of her complaint, we are opening an ongoing investigation into the way in which "solo singles" are treated by employment-based 401(k) programs and pension plans.

Our first step was to confirm the validity of her complaint with American Airlines. Then we looked into the way in which two smaller airlines – National and America West – treat their unmarried employees.

This fall we plan to have a team of college student interns do some investigative reporting into several areas where we have found unfair treatment of unmarried Americans as workers, taxpayers, and consumers.

Complaint: Pension Benefits Forfeited

I am very upset with the way in which the pension plan at American Airlines treats unmarried employees. I have worked as a flight attendant with American for 10 years and would like to designate my sister as my pension beneficiary.

When I called the benefits department for a beneficiary designation form, I was told that "while you are an active employee, if you die only a spouse can receive your pension benefits." I was advised that the beneficiary of an unmarried employee may only collect pension benefits if the employee dies after retirement.

I told the benefits agent that this was marital status discrimination. She replied that "married people have more obligations."

I consider the contributions of American Airlines to the pension plan as part of my employee compensation. I could not believe that my marital status could be used as an excuse to cheat me out of those benefits if I were to die before I retire.

As a new member of AASP, I am very grateful to know there is an organization (and social movement) fighting marital status discrimination. Hopefully, as the spotlight is placed on an all-too-accepted form of social discrimination, AASP will help end inequities that legally single Americans endure on a regular basis.

June M.,
Los Angeles



Response: Solo workers find friendlier skies at National and America West than American Airlines

A year ago, AASP began wondering about workplace equality at American Airlines and other major carriers.

We were concerned when some of these large airlines adopted domestic partner benefits plans which excluded heterosexual couples. In effect, they tell unmarried heterosexual workers that they must get married in order to get benefits for their partners.

Now your complaint raises concerns about the treatment of workers who do not have a spouse or a same-sex partner. Our investigation of your complaint has found that employees who "fly solo" at American will indeed forfeit company contributions to the pension plan if they die before retirement.

After our review of American's pension plan rules confirmed what you told us, we decided to contact two smaller airlines to see how unmarried employees fare under their retirement savings plans.

National Airlines does not have a pension plan, per se, but it does have a 401k plan for employees. Employer contributions to the plan vest in the employee immediately.

An employee's beneficiary may receive all of the assets in the plan regardless of when the employee dies and regardless of whether the employee is married or unmarried, gay or heterosexual.

Furthermore, the domestic partner benefits plan recently adopted by National Airlines does not discriminate against unmarried heterosexual domestic partners.

When we checked with America West Airlines, we found that they had benefits programs similar to those at National Airlines. Their 401k plan operates the same for all employees regardless of gender, marital status, or sexual orientation. Their domestic partner benefits plan is available to same-sex and opposite-sex couples.

Our investigation into the benefits programs at these three airlines reinforces the principle that bigger is not necessarily better. AAA