

Peters and Abrams et al.
vs.
The State of Alaska

Tammy Peters and Linda Abrams have lived together for six years. They have adopted Linda's two children from her marriage that ended in divorce eight years ago. Tammy works for the State of Alaska in the Department of Revenue while Linda is a self-employed bookkeeper. They live in Fairbanks where last year their eldest child was struck by a car and injured badly. To compound the difficulty, Linda had not been able to afford insurance premiums so she and her children were uninsured. The medical bills are in excess of \$75,000. They have made arrangements to pay the debt but the payments are a great drag on their finances. It will take them fifteen years to pay off the bill and the interest that is accruing. Meanwhile, health insurance is even less affordable and they both worry about what might happen if Linda or the children get sick or have some kind of medical emergency. Tammy has health insurance through her employment with the State of Alaska but the State of Alaska provides benefits to dependents of employees only when the employee is married.

Tammy Peters and Linda Abrams have sued the State of Alaska alleging they have been unjustly and illegally denied the health insurance benefits from Tammy's job with the State. They state they are a household and, as they are in a committed long-term relationship, should receive the same health insurance benefits as a married couple. They cite the following example:

Jon and Maria Maddox are married. She is 38 and he is 42. Maria has adopted the three school-age children Jon had in a former marriage. Maria works for the State of Alaska as a policy analyst and Jon owns and operates a souvenir shop that depends on the tourist trade. He works long hours from May through early September when the cruise ships come to Juneau, where they live. Most of the time Jon does well with his business but there are some years when the tourists do not come in large numbers and his income drops. He is a frugal business owner and prides himself on keeping his costs low. Fortunately, he does not have to carry health insurance as he and the children are covered under Maria's health insurance that is provided by her job with the State. This helps him keep his business healthy and the Maddox family in good health.

Should the State of Alaska provide benefits to same-sex couples as they do to married couples?

Look at the Declaration of Rights of the Alaska Constitution and base your decision on the basic law you find there. Explain your decision.