

17% of weddings were same sex in 1st year

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December 6, 2013 Updated 13 hours ago



Tina Roose and Teresa Guarjado sign papers for a marriage license at midnight Dec. 6, 2012, the first moment same-sex marriage became legal in Washington.

TONY OVERMAN — Olympian file photo

More than 7,000 same-sex couples have wed in Washington since same-sex marriage was legalized one year ago Friday.

State officials reported Thursday that gay weddings made up 17 percent of marriages in Washington from Dec. 6, 2012, to September, the most recent month of data.

About a quarter of the same-sex marriages were unions involving both parties from out of state, according to the state Department of Health. The agency said 524 were from Oregon, 170 from Texas and 155 from California.

All but one of Washington's 39 counties — Garfield County — reported same-sex marriages during the first 10 months of the law.

The state's most populous county, King, had 3,452 same-sex marriages — most in the state. Clark, located on the Oregon border, had the second most at 785. Ranked third was Pierce with 486, followed by Snohomish with 330 and then Thurston with 300.

Washington was one of three states to affirm or approve same-sex marriage in the 2012 election and is one of 15 states plus the District of Columbia where gay marriage is legal.

In 2009, the state was the first to affirm the rights of same-sex couples at the ballot box — when voters approved a referendum on domestic partner rights.

One of the main sponsors of the Washington state law that led to same-sex marriage said the wedding numbers were higher than he expected.

During the five years the state offered same-sex couples a registry rather than a marriage certificate, only 9,500 couples registered as domestic partners, with about 950 who were not gay, said state Rep. Jamie Pedersen, D-Seattle.

“In terms of the uptake in marriages, that's a remarkable number,” he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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