

**AASP** **American Association for Single People**  
*Protecting the rights of single adults and domestic partners with or without children*

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June 18, 1999

Hon. Gray Davis  
UC Regent, Ex-Officio  
Governor's Office  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Proposing a Gender-Neutral Domestic Partner Benefits  
Plan for employees who work at the University of California

Dear Governor Davis:

On behalf of two of our members, I am writing to you in your capacity as an ex-officio member of the Board of Regents of the University of California. We are requesting that you introduce a measure to the Board include opposite-sex couples in the university's domestic partner benefits plan.

On November 21, 1997, the Board of Regents authorized UC President Richard C. Atkinson to extend health care benefits to same-sex domestic partners of UC employees and certain other family members who are financially inter-dependent. University officials estimated that the new plan could cost as much as \$5.6 million a year. (See attached UC news release.)

Although you voted in favor of the same-sex plan when it came to the table in November 1997, you apparently favored a gender-neutral program but voted for the same-sex plan as a step toward more inclusiveness. The Los Angeles Times reported that you and Regent Connerly and others stated that you would introduce a proposal in January 1998 "to further expand [UC] health benefits to include unmarried heterosexual couples." (See attached LA Times article dated November 22, 1997.)

On December 2, 1997, I wrote to you about your proposal to include all domestic partners in the benefits plan, regardless of their gender. (See attached letter.) Along with that letter, I sent you the draft of an op-ed article which later appeared in the Los Angeles Daily Journal. (See attached Daily Journal article dated January 12, 1998.)

On March 11, 1998, the Congress of California Seniors sent a letter to President Atkinson asking that the new benefits plan be opened up to UC employees and retirees who live with an opposite-sex domestic partner. (See attached letter.)

Fear of excessively high costs was one of the reasons cited by regents for the exclusion of opposite-sex domestic partners. Now that the data is in, that fear has been proven to be unfounded.

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Only 701 same-sex partners of UC employees signed up for the new benefits, representing an increase in enrollment of only one-half of one percent (0.5%). Another 404 close blood relatives who are dependent on employees signed up, generating an additional enrollment increase of only three-tenths of one percent (0.3%). (See attached LA Times article dated November 6, 1998.)

Therefore, even though the Board of Regents was prepared to spend as much as \$5.6 million a year for domestic partner benefits, the annual cost is only \$1.8 million. As a result, the projected costs would have been more than sufficient to have covered opposite-sex domestic partners in the program. Opposite-sex couples might cause enrollment to increase by about one percent (1.0%)

The trend in domestic partner benefits programs for government employees is to adopt gender-neutral plans. All cities and counties in California with domestic partner programs treat same-sex and opposite-sex unmarried couples the same. Virtually all school districts with such programs are also gender-neutral in their approach. As you know, the California Legislature recently approved a gender-neutral domestic partner benefits program for its staff.

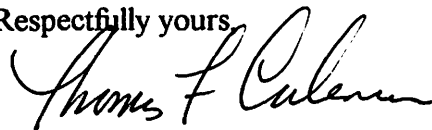
It is also noteworthy that all domestic partner bills currently pending in the Legislature (AB 26, AB 107, AB 909, SB 75, SB 118) include same-sex and opposite-sex unmarried couples in their protections. It is reasonable to assume that you will sign these bills into law if they reach your desk, considering the fact that when you were running for Governor you indicated support for gender-neutral domestic partner benefits and opposition to same-sex only plans. (See attached survey response dated September 1, 1998.)

The Legislature and most public and private employers understand that couples may have important reasons for choosing domestic partnership rather than matrimony. (See attached article entitled "Fairness and the Distribution of Employee Benefits: What's wrong with excluding opposite-sex couples from domestic partner benefits programs?") We hope that the University of California also would respect such highly personal decisions of its employees.

With all of this in mind, we request that you place a proposal before the Board of Regents to remove the gender restriction from the University's domestic partner benefits program. Doing so will enable the AASP members on whose behalf I am writing to you -- one of whom is employed by UC and the other being the partner in need of a health plan -- to participate in the program. It will also benefit older workers and retirees who have opposite-sex domestic partners.


Thank you for considering our request. We look forward to your reply.

Respectfully yours,



THOMAS F. COLEMAN  
Executive Director

cc: President Richard Atkinson  
Regent Ward Connerly



March 13, 1999

Mr. Tom Coleman, Attorney at Law  
American Association for Single People  
PO Box 65756  
Los Angeles, CA. 90065

Dear Mr. Coleman:

As a member of the American Association of Single People, I am writing to ask for your help. I have been living with a spouse for over 25 years, but because we choose not to legally marry, I am being denied medical and dental benefits, as well as a host of other benefits that are provided for free for legally married spouses of employees of the University of California.

I am a self-employed counselor and nurse in private practice, and have no benefits through my job. Because I cannot receive benefits through my partner's job, I must pay \$1800 per year in monthly premiums for Kaiser Health Plan medical coverage, as well as paying significant co-payments for every doctor visit, medication, lab test, and other services. In addition, because of our marital status, I cannot receive dental benefits through my partner's job at UC Berkeley, which would be free of charge to me if we were legally married. As a result, I must pay for all dental care out of pocket, and over the past three years I was forced to spend nearly \$5000 on medically necessary dental work.

Last year, the University of California Regents voted to approve providing domestic partner benefit for same-sex domestic partners of UC employees, but explicitly and deliberately chose to exclude opposite-sex partners from these benefits. I applaud UC's decision to afford same-sex couples the same benefits enjoyed by heterosexual married couples, and I feel hopeful that this is a dramatic step forward for recognition of gay families and will provide needed medical and dental benefits to gay couples. However, the exclusion of opposite-sex domestic partners constitutes discrimination based on marital status. This discriminatory policy is costing my household thousands of dollars every year, and I am certain that there are many other unmarried opposite-sex couples who are suffering financially from this policy. Is there anything that can be done to change UC's unfair policy to include opposite-sex domestic partners?

I am writing to ask for your help in addressing this inequity. I do not want my name to be used or revealed as I do not want my partner to face any possible retaliation at his job as a result of this request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

