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**PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY
PANEL
ON FEDERAL TAX REFORM**

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The President's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform
1440 New York Avenue NW Suite 2100
Washington, DC 20220

To Whom It May Concern:

I am concerned about the unfairness of the current federal tax system. My partner and I were married in Multnomah County last March. While it was amazing to be recognized by the county and the state of Oregon, it is disturbing to not be recognized by the federal government.

My partner is employed by the City of Vancouver Parks and Recreation Department. Vancouver/Clark Parks and Recreation offers domestic partner benefits so my health insurance is covered. However, my partner is taxed on the value of these benefits as though she earned it as income. This amounts to nearly \$4,000 a year of increased taxed income. If our marriage was recognized by the government, she would not be taxed on the value of my benefits. While other employees can use flexible spending accounts to pay for a different-sex spouse's medical expenses (including eyeglasses, prescriptions, and co-pays, on a pre-tax basis), my partner and I do not have access to these accounts because they cannot be used for a same-sex partner, or even a same-sex spouse.

My partner and I are pregnant – our first child is due in November. It concerns me that Social Security provides "surviving parent" benefits to the parent caring for a minor child when the other parent dies but that children raised by same-sex couples are excluded from this benefit, even though their parents pay equally into Social Security. This benefit is only given to couples who are recognized as "spouses" under federal law, which same-sex couples are not. Even though the benefit is for children and not spouses, Tax treatment of retirement savings, such as those found in 401(k) plans, privileges spouses and penalizes same-sex couples. This means that on the death of a partner, the surviving partner is left not only with the same emotional loss that a different-sex spouse experiences, but also with an unfair tax bill. This problem is made even more acute by the fact that same-sex couples are denied survivors' benefits under Social Security, even though they pay the same payroll taxes as heterosexual workers.

I have many other concerns as well. For instance, all GLBT people pay into Social Security on an equal basis with their heterosexual counterparts, but are not eligible for equal benefits. Same-sex partners do not receive survivors' benefits when a partner dies, even though they pay for them equally. Same-sex partners are not eligible for spouse's benefits when a partner becomes disabled, even though they pay equally into the program. Furthermore, children being raised by GLBT people are denied it because their parents cannot marry. Different-sex spouses get a complete exemption from estate and gift taxes. But same-sex partners, even ones who are married in Massachusetts or parties to civil unions in Vermont, are treated as strangers under the tax code. So when a partner dies, their estate is subject to taxation.

Life as a minority is tough enough without adding on all of the extra financial burdens. All people of this country should have access to equal rights and opportunities. This equality is not reflected in the current tax code.

Please consider my concerns,



Liz Eisman