

## **Gay politics and the Minister for Justice**

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Madam, - Your Editorial of July 25th, "Gay politics", rightly highlights the great strides that have been made in Ireland in giving lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people the rights they were denied for so long.

In campaigning for decriminalisation and for the equality legislation that includes sexual orientation as a protected ground, we were often warned of the great "backlash" that these simple equality measures would unleash. Such a backlash did not materialise, however, and a time when gay men could be imprisoned for consensual sex now seems inconceivable.

The spectre of the backlash has been raised again in relation to marriage and civil partnership, though one could equally emphasise the capacity of people in Ireland to accommodate change with fairness and generosity. Lack of provision for marriage or civil partnership, as your Editorial points out, is not just a symbolic gap but has very practical and negative implications for individual LGB people.

People have been forced out of their homes on the death of a partner. LGB couples, where one partner is from outside the European Economic Area, have been split apart or forced to live outside Ireland where their relationships can be secured without the threat of separation. The list goes on.

This is a time of great change in Irish society and our confidence to embrace such change should not be diminished by political failure in other countries. The fractious political debates of the US are less relevant to Ireland than our own solid achievements, and those of our EU partners, in promoting equality for LGB people. - Yours, etc,

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