

# Chicago Tribune

## Joyous same-sex couples wed in Hawaii as gay marriage becomes legal

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HONOLULU (Reuters) - Dozens of same-sex couples, led by a gay minister and his longtime partner, tied the knot in Hawaii early on Monday as a new law went into effect at midnight, making the Aloha state the 15th to legalize gay marriage.

With Democratic Governor Neil Abercrombie in attendance, Jonipher Kwong and Chris Nelson became the first gay couple to marry in Hawaii during a ceremony at the First Unitarian Church of Honolulu, just minutes after same-sex weddings became legal.

"I've done many weddings for other couples but didn't realize how profound it would be for me," said Kwong, a minister at First Unitarian and vocal advocate of the new law who has waited 15 years to marry his partner.

"At the end of the evening I was speechless to be part of that historic moment, not just for us but those who will come after," he told Reuters. "I also felt a little sad that some of the people who came before were not able to complete marriage and see it in their lifetime."

Hawaii's governor signed legislation last month extending marriage rights to same-sex couples, capping 20 years of legal and political rancor in a state regarded as a pioneer in advancing the cause of gay matrimony.

Kwong and Nelson joined a rush of other same-sex couples who were quick to tie the knot as the law went into effect. Their ranks include between 30 and 40 same-sex couples who were married at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel in Honolulu starting just after midnight local time, according to a hotel [employee](#).

"It felt like we were actually first-class citizens," Kwong said of his wedding. "We're both still riding [cloud](#)nine at this point."