

HONOLULU MAGAZINE

Marriage for Hawaii's gay and lesbian couples becomes a reality

DIANE LEE

The Hawaii State Department of Health opened its doors at 8 a.m. today for couples to apply for marriage licenses. But many same-sex couples couldn't wait, exchanging wedding rings shortly after midnight Dec. 2, the first day Hawaii's Marriage Equality Act took effect.

Waikiki residents Gary Bradley and Paul Perry were one of those couples. Dressed in matching green and white aloha shirts, they exchanged wedding rings shortly after midnight at the same time five other gay and lesbian couples married—the first in a series of ceremonies at the Sheraton Waikiki.

“It gives us the full recognition we've never had before,” Bradley says. “It's not just about us, but our friends and other people who have fought for equality for so long.”

Across town, another couple tied the knot at the First Unitarian Church of Honolulu in Nuuanu Valley. Minister Jonipher Kuponu Kwong married his partner of 15 years, Chris Nelson. More than 150 friends, family, clergy, church members and state representatives, including Gov. Neil Abercrombie, witnessed the invitation-only wedding ceremony.

Hawaii became the 15th state to legalize same-sex marriage when Abercrombie signed it into law on Nov. 13.

“With the stroke of a koa pen, he declared 'done,'" Kwong told the crowd with Abercrombie sitting in the front row. “But with all due respect, governor, I don't think we're done, because it's one thing to sign a bill into law and yet another to see it enacted and to see it in action here tonight.”



Rep. Kaniela Ing, Gov. Neil Abercrombie, Chris Nelson, Jonipher Kuponu Kwong and Rep. Chris Lee.

PHOTO: DIANE LEE

