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D.C. marriage bureau preparing for crush of same-sex couples

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D.C. Superior Court officials are preparing for what they expect to be a flood of same-sex couples descending on the courthouse Wednesday to apply for marriage licenses.

Wednesday is the first day that same-sex couples in the District can apply for licenses in the marriage office, in Room 4485.

"We're anticipating a lot of excited residents from the District and suburbs coming down to the court to apply, and we want to make this as smooth an experience as possible," said Lee F. Satterfield, the court's chief judge.

To expedite the process, Satterfield said, couples should bring, in addition to their "patience," completed applications, which can be [downloaded](#) from the [court's Web site](#). Couples should also have \$35 for their application and \$10 for the license (cash or money order).

The application fee is waived for couples who are registered in the District as domestic partners. Those couples should bring their proof of registration and the \$10 license fee.

Satterfield said he expects the marriage bureau to receive far more than the usual 10 marriage applications completed each day. The office has hired temporary employees to help staff the bureau. Satterfield has also arranged to bring in additional workers from other areas in the courthouse if needed.

"We want this court to serve the community and be in a position to add to the joy and excitement we expect to see in the couples who come to the court," he said.

The court has also had to redo its traditional applications and brochures. Gone is the language that asked for the name of "bride" and "groom." Instead, the applications ask for the name of the "spouse."

Also tweaked: the final pronouncement of "husband and wife." Now judges will proclaim, "I now pronounce you legally married," unless the marrying couple suggests something different.

It takes three business days for the applications to be processed, so the soonest the couples will be able to wed is March 9.

Court officials are also expecting protests by groups opposed to same-sex marriage.

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