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Historic Statement from Taoiseach Supporting Marriage for Lesbian and Gay Couples

Following today's historic decision by the Government to hold a referendum on civil marriage for lesbian and gay couples in 2015, the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny has declared his strong support for civil marriage for lesbian and gay couples and said that he will campaign for a yes vote in the upcoming referendum.

"We are delighted with the Taoiseach's announcement of his strong support for civil marriage for lesbian and gay couples. It is a momentous and proud moment when our Taoiseach and the leader of our country endorses and supports full citizenship in the Constitution through civil marriage for lesbian and gay people" said GLEN Chair Kieran Rose

"The Taoiseach's support for the full and equal citizenship of lesbian and gay people is deeply heartening and encouraging both for lesbian and gay and people and for the families of gay and lesbian people all over Ireland" said Rose.

"Ireland has made huge progress in evolving towards full equality and civil marriage for lesbian and gay people and all Political parties have played critically important roles in getting us this far" said Rose.

"With the support of the Taoiseach and of Labour and Fine Gael in Government, and with the support of the other Political Parties, we believe that the people of Ireland will support the final step to full constitutional equality for lesbian and gay people and families in the referendum in 2015" said Rose.

"The widespread public support for more than 1,500 Civil Partnership that have already been celebrated all across Ireland and the growing political and public support shows that Ireland is ready for the next step in the 20 year journey to civil marriage and full Constitutional equality for lesbian and gay people and families" concluded Rose.

Ends

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Editors Note:**1. Fine Gael support for equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people**

Fine Gael have a strong track record in supporting progressive equality measures for lesbian and gay people. In Government with Labour in the 1990s they brought forward the first proposals for equality legislation which included sexual orientation; they were the first party to produce a Civil Partnership policy in 2004, and they strongly supported the passage of the Civil Partnership Act through the Oireachtas in 2010; this Government has brought forward tax and citizenship equality for civil partners. Deputy Jerry Buttimer became the first openly gay Fine Gael TD and established the Fine Gael LGBT group in 2012.

2. Timeline of progress for lesbian and gay people

1993	Equality based legal reform that abolished old criminal laws on homosexuality
1993	Unfair Dismissals Act updated to protect lesbian and gay workers
1996	Ireland becomes one of the first countries in the world to offer explicit protection from persecution to lesbian and gay people in the Refugee Act
1996	Irish Government support ensures inclusion of sexual orientation protections in the EU Amsterdam Treaty
1998	Lesbian and gay employees protection in all aspects of employment and recruitment in Employment Equality Act
2000 & 2004	Protection for lesbian and gay people in the provision of all goods and services in the Equal Status Act
2010	Civil Partnership Act provides marriage-like rights and responsibilities for lesbian and gay couples. This includes equal treatment in inheritance, next of kin, maintenance, shared home protections, pensions, immigration and protection from discrimination.
2010	Social Welfare amendment Act provides for equal treatment for civil partners and cohabiting same-sex couples in all social welfare provisions.
2011	Finance Act provides for equality in tax provisions for civil partners
2011	Lesbian and gay civil partners treated equally in citizenship.
2013	Constitutional Convention votes overwhelmingly to support marriage for lesbian and gay couples and to update family legislation to recognise and support lesbian and gay families.
2013	Government announces referendum on marriage for lesbian and gay couples
2013	Taoiseach confirms his support for marriage for lesbian and gay couples