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## Newsroom: Euer '10 on RI Civil Unions

Roger Williams University School of Law

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# Newsroom

## Euer '10 on RI Civil Unions

Dawn Euer '10 was cited by the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal in an AP story on same-sex couples' cool reaction to civil unions in Rhode Island.

**From THE ASSOCIATED PRESS:** "So far only 9 couples get civil unions in RI!"

*RWU Law alumna Dawn Euer '10 was cited in this article, picked up by both [The New York Times](#) and [The Wall Street Journal](#). Euer also spoke about the issue on CBS affiliate WPRI 12 in Providence.*

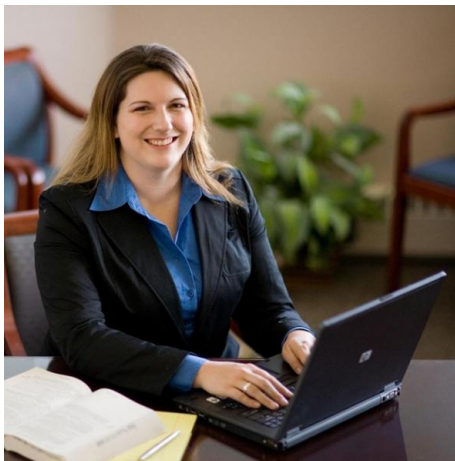


**PROVIDENCE, R.I., AUGUST 15, 2011** — Few Rhode Islanders have entered

into civil unions since the state began offering them to gay couples.

Only nine couples were joined in a civil union in July, the first month civil union licenses were available, according to numbers obtained by the Associated Press on Monday.

Groups that fought this year's losing battle to extend marriage to gay couples in the Ocean State say the tepid response to civil unions shows they are a poor substitute for marriage.



"If it had been marriage people would have been lining up," **said Dawn Euer ['10], a spokeswoman for Marriage Equality Rhode Island.** "People are holding out for marriage. They want true equality, not a made-up, bureaucratic, second-class status."

The state lawmaker who wrote the civil union bill said it will take longer than one month to gauge the new law's effect. Some couples may need time to weigh whether a civil union is right for them, he said.

"Give it time," said Rep. Peter Petrarca, D-Lincoln. "It's summer. I'm sure we'll see an uptick once people start figuring it out and deciding what they want."

Under the law, same-sex couples may enter into civil unions that provide the same rights and benefits given to married couples under Rhode Island law. Four other states — Illinois, New Jersey, Hawaii and Delaware — have similar civil union laws. Six states now allow gay couples to marry: Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Vermont and New York.

While nine Rhode Island couples have entered into civil unions, others may have sought civil union licenses but not executed them in a required ceremony.

The small number of couples entering into civil unions shows that gay marriage advocates are more interested in the marriage label itself, and not the practical rights that marriage brings, said Chris Plante, executive director of the National Organization for Marriage-Rhode Island.

"It shows the debate is not about rights or benefits or privileges," Plante said. "The fact that gays and lesbians have not exercised this new right shows that the only thing they want to do is redefine marriage."

The state's General Assembly passed legislation authorizing civil unions this year after a gay marriage bill stalled. Groups on both sides opposed the compromise. Gay marriage supporters said civil unions treat gay couples as second-class citizens. Opponents said they worried that civil unions would quickly lead to full marriage rights for gay couples.

Marriage Equality Rhode Island will push gay marriage legislation in next year's legislative session, **Euer said.**

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