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Attorney General Holder Announces Federal Government to Recognize Same-Sex Married Couples in Six Additional States

In the latest development following the Supreme Court's decision earlier this month to decline to hear any pending cases regarding same-sex marriage, Attorney General Eric Holder announced Saturday that the federal government will now recognize same-sex married couples in six new states: Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, North Carolina, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Last week, the Attorney General made a similar announcement with respect to seven other states: Colorado, Indiana, Nevada, Oklahoma, Utah, Virginia and Wisconsin. Saturday's announcement adds to that list and brings the total number of states where same-sex couples are recognized by the federal government to 32, plus the District of Columbia.

The Attorney General's announcement means couples married in these states will now qualify for a range of federal benefits, including those administered by the Social Security Administration and Department of Veterans Affairs.

"With each new state where same-sex marriages are legally recognized, our nation moves closer to achieving of full equality for all Americans," the Attorney General said. "We are acting as quickly as possible with agencies throughout the government to ensure that same-sex married couples in these states receive the fullest array of benefits allowable under federal law."

In addition, the Attorney General also announced that the Department of Justice has determined it can legally recognize marriages performed in Indiana and Wisconsin this past June. These marriages were performed immediately after federal district courts ruled that those states' bans on same-sex marriage are unconstitutional, but subsequent developments created confusion about the status of those marriages. Based on the Attorney General's announcement, however, those couples married during that period will now have their unions recognized by the federal government.