

WASHINGTON — Supporters of same-sex marriage celebrated the Supreme Court rulings on Wednesday as landmark decisions that brought the nation closer to full equality. Opponents said the court had badly overreached in striking down the Defense of Marriage Act, and they vowed to press on against same-sex marriage in the courts and through a constitutional ban.

### **Respond to the Justices**

What is your reaction to the Supreme Court's ruling that struck down the Defense of Marriage Act? Review a selection of key statements from justices on both sides of *United States v. Windsor* and share your perspective.

“This doesn’t end it,” said Representative Tim Huelskamp, Republican of Kansas. “If anything, it’s been ignited and continues to be discussed.” He said the court action was an attempt to “short-circuit the process and to undo a decision, a strong bipartisan decision, signed by President Bill Clinton and supported by then-Senator Joe Biden; for this court to overrule it, I think folks are tired of judges dictating.”

Backers of same-sex marriage in Washington and around the nation embraced the rulings and welcomed what they said was the demise of a biased federal law that turned gay Americans into second-class citizens.

Edith Windsor, the lead plaintiff in the Defense of Marriage Act case, was ecstatic, saying her “immediate reaction was just tears.”

At a news conference in Manhattan, she said, “We won and got everything we hoped for.” Referring to Thea Spyer, whom she married in 2007 and who died in 2009, Ms. Windsor said, “If I had to survive Thea, what a glorious way to do it.”

En route to Africa, President Obama issued a statement that said the court action represented “a victory for couples who have long fought for equal treatment under the law; for children whose parents’ marriages will now be recognized, rightly, as legitimate; for families that, at long last, will get the respect and protection they deserve; and for friends and supporters who have wanted nothing more than to see their loved ones treated fairly and have worked hard to persuade their nation to change for the better.”

Senator Barbara Boxer, Democrat of California, who opposed the legislation in 1996, said: “Today my spirits are soaring because the Supreme Court reaffirmed the promise of America by rejecting two blatantly unconstitutional measures that discriminated against millions of our families. It is so heartening to see that the federal government will now treat all marriages equally. Because of the court’s ruling on Proposition 8, millions of Californians

will be able to marry the person they love — with all the rights and responsibilities that go along with it.”

In San Francisco, Tory Pallman, 35, an information technology project manager for Disney, attended a rally so that her daughter could experience the event firsthand.

“She was born just after Prop 8 passed, so it’s been a bummer for her parents,” Ms. Pallman said. She added: “We can’t put my wife on our insurance, we don’t have parental protection across all 50 states the way married couples do. Obviously in California we are really lucky with domestic partnerships; we are really well protected, but it’s not really the same. She’s going to grow up in a world where it’s the same.”

Outside the Supreme Court, where the sidewalk was thick with rainbow-colored flags, Brian Brown, the head of the National Organization for Marriage, acknowledged that his group’s fight against same-sex marriage was increasingly uphill.

“Obviously it’s a loss to say that the federal government has no right to define marriage as it’s always understood,” he said. “It is just legal chicanery. It’s untrue. It’s a bad decision.”

But he insisted that same-sex marriage opponents had scored a victory in the case involving California’s ban, Proposition 8. Rather than embrace a broad constitutional right to same-sex marriage, as the lead lawyers Theodore B. Olson and David Boies had urged, the justices issued a ruling that ensured a return to same-sex marriage only in California.

Mr. Brown, a father of eight who converted to Catholicism, said that his views on marriage were rooted in his faith, and that he would fight to roll back same-sex marriage wherever it existed. He vowed to press for a federal constitutional ban on same-sex marriage — a proposal that was floated, but gained little traction, during President George W. Bush’s 2004 re-election bid and would seem to have little chance in the Democratically controlled Senate.

Speaker John A. Boehner, who had led House Republicans in paying for a court defense of the federal law after the Obama administration declined to back it in court, said he was disappointed in the ruling.

“A robust national debate over marriage will continue in the public square, and it is my hope that states will define marriage as the union between one man and one woman,” Mr. Boehner said.

Representative Mark Takano, a freshman Democrat from California and one of the seven openly gay, lesbian or bisexual members of Congress, followed the court's action from the sidewalk outside, across the street from the Capitol.

"I'm elated," he said. "It's a huge, huge step forward for freedom and equality. And I'm hopeful about what this means."

Senator Tammy Baldwin, Democrat of Wisconsin, who this year became the first openly gay person to serve in the Senate, praised the decision but issued a sobering statement, maintaining that gays and lesbians still had a long way to go before achieving full legal equality, despite the progress evident from the Supreme Court's ruling.

"This progress is defined by the ideal that more and more Americans want to leave to the next generation a country that is more equal, not less," she said. Same-sex marriage is not recognized in 38 states.

Bishop V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire, who 10 years ago became the first openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church, said the court rulings were about respect.

Reached at the airport in Philadelphia as he was getting on a plane, Bishop Robinson, who retired last year, said: "It's really about respect, and the respect of the society in which one lives. You don't realize it if you've already got it, but if you don't have it and then you get it, it's an amazing gift."

He and his longtime partner, Mark Andrew, were married on Jan. 1, 2010, the first day that same-sex marriage was legal in New Hampshire. They had been joined in a civil union in 2008.

"It continues to surprise me how important the state's validation of marriage is to us as a couple," Bishop Robinson said. "Today, if my plane goes down on the way to Minneapolis, my partner, my husband, gets my Social Security benefits. It has a real effect on my husband, on my children. It's just an astounding thing."

Deborah Spell, 48, of Ridgewood, N.J., was with her wife, Wendy Kennedy, 50, at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, where proponents of same-sex marriage gathered to await the court's decisions. The two were joined in a civil union in New Jersey in July 2010, and they married in Connecticut a few weeks later.

“Each time we go out of town, our living will is literally on our list of things to pack,” Ms. Spell said before the decision was announced. “Whether you’re gay or straight or whatever, there’s this idea of marriage.”

As television stations reported the decision on the Defense of Marriage Act, the bar erupted into euphoria, with shouts and tears of joy and kisses — and the opening of Champagne bottles.

“This is unreal,” Ms. Spell said while crying. “I just can’t believe it. My life has changed completely. This is unbelievable. I am speechless.”

Shortly after the decision was announced, two men got engaged at the bar, which is considered by many to be a birthplace of the gay rights movement. Aaron Kristen, 41, held a sign reading “I love you, will you marry me, Jorge,” as his boyfriend and newly minted fiancé, Jorge Delgado, looked on, beaming. “I have been waiting my whole life for this,” Mr. Kristen said. “We don’t need external validation, but when it comes it feels so good.”