Important Dates

1924 The Society for Human Rights in Chicago becomes the country's earliest known gay rights organization.

1962 Illinois becomes the first US state to decriminalize homosexual acts between consenting adults.

1973 The American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders.

1982 The *Village Voice*, a New York City weekly newspaper, becomes the first employer to offer domestic partner benefits to its lesbian and gay employees.

1982 Wisconsin becomes the first state to outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

1993 The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is instituted for the US military, permitting gays to serve in the military but banning homosexual self-identification and activity.

1996 The city of San Francisco passes the nation's first equal benefits ordinance, which requires employers that contract with the city government to offer the same benefits to employees' domestic partners as they offer to their legal spouses.

2000 Vermont becomes the first state in the country to recognize legal civil unions between gay or lesbian couples. The law states that these "couples would be entitled to the same benefits, privileges, and responsibilities as spouses." It stops short of referring to same-sex unions as marriage, which the state continues to define as pertaining only to heterosexual couples.

2004 On May 17, same-sex marriages become legal in Massachusetts.

2009 On June 17, President Obama signs a referendum allowing the same-sex partners of federal employees to receive benefits.

On December 18, the US Senate voted 65 to 31 in favor of repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

2011 New York passes a law to allow same-sex marriage.

2012 On May 9, President Barak Obama endorses same-sex marriage.