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The number of couples applying to say ‘I do’ rises dramatically in D.C.

By DeNeen L. Brown February 15 Follow @DeNeenLBrown



Teresa Bell, age 52 and Gary Adams, age 50 pose for friends and family after getting married in DC's Superior Court on Feb. 14. In honor of Valentine's Day, the court's marriage bureau opened for Saturday weddings.

Washington has seen a huge increase in the number of couples wanting to say, “I do.”

Applications for marriage licenses shot up by more than 5,000 in the last four years, according to the D.C. Superior Court.

From March 2013 to March 2014, 8,436 couples applied for licenses in D.C. Superior Court, officials say, compared with the 5,679 applications filed in the previous year.



WASHINGTON, DC – FEBRUARY 14: Tenisha Campbell, 33 and Ronald Holloway, 32 hold hands while exchanging wedding vows in DC's Superior Court on Valentine's Day in Washington, DC on February 14, 2015. In honor of Valentine's Day, the court's Marriage Bureau, opened its calendar for Saturday weddings. Two different marriage ceremony rooms were going as 14 different couples took their vows today. (Photo by Linda Davidson / The Washington Post)

The number of applications increased after the Supreme Court's decision in *United States v. Windsor*, in which justices decided that federal marriage benefits could extend to same-sex couples.

March 3, 2010, was the first day D.C. Superior Court was authorized to accept marriage licenses for same-sex couples, court officials said.



Officiant Wilma Brier marries Aren and Jessica Faruq. The marriage bureau opened two rooms for 14 different couples. (Photo by Linda Davidson / The Washington Post)

“We officiate about 2,400 weddings at the courthouse per year,” said Hiram E. Puig-Lugo, presiding judge of the family court. “It’s a joyful experience to see people coming in with family and loved ones.”



Tenisha Campbell, 33 and Ronald Holloway, 32 kiss after exchanging wedding vows in DC’s Superior Court on Valentine’s Day. (Photo by Linda Davidson / The Washington Post)

On Saturday, D.C. Superior Court’s Marriage Bureau opened its doors for the first time on a weekend in decades to accommodate the requests of couples wanting to say “I do” on a day set aside for romantic love.



Joyce and William Campbell watch as their daughter Tenisha Campbell and Ronald Holloway get married. (Photo by Linda Davidson / The Washington Post)

Beginning at 9 o’clock on Valentine’s Day morning, court officiants performed 14 weddings in two marriage ceremony rooms decorated with red, purple and

strawberry-pink hearts. Cupids shooting arrows transformed the ceremony rooms, halls and offices of the courthouse into a celebration of love. Valentines reading “Kiss me,” “Hug!” “Luv U” and “Be Mine” hung from ceilings.



Tenisha Campbell, her aunt Sereda Fowlkes and other family members gather in the hallway outside DC’s Superior Court on Valentine’s Day.

Brides wore dresses of red lace, ivory sheathes, white tea dresses with tiny pearls. One bride arrived in a red dress, black knit stockings and red velvet high-heel shoes.



Liam O'Brien, 22 kisses his new bride, Alyse Carney, 21. (Photo by Linda Davidson / The Washington Post)

They stood under trellises that the marriage bureau staff had decorated with vines entwined with silk pink and red roses.



Friends gather around Gerard Mude, 34, and new bride Lina Mwabuka, 27, after the couple exchanged vows. Mude said of his new wife, "I love her because she's honest and is just a nice person."

In 14 civil ceremonies, excited and nervous couples repeated vows, pledging “to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish, till death do us part.”



Teresa Bell and Gary Adams take their wedding vows.

Cameras flashed. Family members cheered. Couples kissed, answering “I do” to the timeless question of marriage:

“Wilt thou love, comfort, honor and keep your Spouse in sickness and in health, forsaking all others so long as ye both shall live?”

Four three joyous hours on the fourth floor of a courthouse, brides twirled, grooms became emotional and the bureau staff, which had volunteered to come in on a weekend to accommodate the requests for couples to marry on Valentine’s Day, looked on smiling.

“It’s romantic and an easy way not to forget the anniversary. The couples will remember their wedding date for a long time,” said Leah Gurowitz, director of legislative, intergovernmental and public affairs for the District of Columbia Courts. “People have gotten a kick out of it.”



WASHINGTON, DC – FEBRUARY 14: Groom Aren Faruq, 36 wears polka dot socks to get married in DC's Superior Court on Valentines Day in Washington, DC on February 14, 2015. In honor of Valentine's Day, the court's Marriage Bureau, opened its calendar for Saturday weddings. Two different marriage ceremony rooms were going as 14 different couples took their vows today. (Photo by Linda Davidson / The Washington Post)

DeNeen L. Brown is an award-winning staff writer at The Washington Post who has covered night police, education, courts, politics and culture.