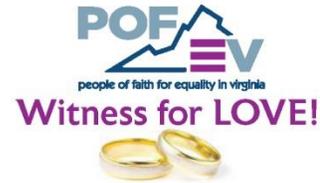


## Back Outside the Courthouse

- All come back together, to celebrate the witness that happened inside. It is not a loss, even though the licenses were not granted, and even if the Clerk refuses to keep anything on file (they are not legally obligated to do so). Instead, it is a gain: citizens have stood up and declared that love must be treated equally by our government.
- It is a good idea to let people share their feelings if they wish to do so. And it is entirely appropriate (and a good media picture) for one or more clergy to bless the couple(s). And for all to applaud. It also is good to have someone prepared to give a short address, to restate the desire of the group for marriage equality, to support ALL families, to clearly state why all are gathered.
- Sometimes, groups arrange for a song or for group singing (with a leader, though, so it sounds reasonably good (singing outside is not easy in a group)).
- And then, a blessing, It is important that someone say words like this: "We'll be back, next year, and every year until marriage equality is the law of Virginia." The group applauds or cheers, and folks disperse (if this midday, some may wish to share lunch).



**Questions? Want More Information, write us at [witnessforlove@pofev.org](mailto:witnessforlove@pofev.org)**



## What Is Witness for LOVE!???

**Witness for Love is an intentional public action to make it clear to officials and citizens in a community that local people feel strongly about the need for marriage equality. *These are celebrations of love with the intention of sharing a clear message:***

***"We want all Virginians to be able to marry the person of their dreams, and we want it to happen now!"***

It also is important for everyone to know four things:

- This is a statewide effort; folks are gathering all over Virginia on this day.
- This is only the beginning of a year-long effort to get the General Assembly to vote in 2015 to put repeal of the Anti-Marriage Amendment on the ballot in 2016. This event is the beginning of the campaign.
- This is an opportunity to demonstrate that there are couples who wish to have their legal marriage from another state recognized by Virginia, or they wish to be legally married in Virginia.
- It is good, in advance, to let the local clerk know you are coming because it is also an opportunity to build a relationship with them; their office will be the place for couples to obtain their license when it becomes legal. We can help build a positive connection for that day which is coming!

## So What Happens on February 14?

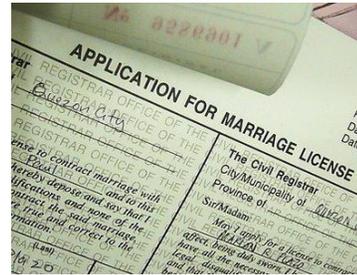
Every community can create their own witness, but there are elements that seem to work really well.

### Outside the Courthouse

- The group gathers at the courthouse—in a space that does not block or cause undue inconvenience to pedestrian traffic in and out (or wherever authorities have indicated is appropriate)—at the specified time. As people gather, **one or more persons should have a clipboard and ask each person to add their name, email, and any other contact information they can share so we can stay in touch, and help them contact their Delegate and Senator to urge them to sign the Equality Pledge to put the amendment on the ballot.**
  - A designated leader calls the assembled crowd together, reminding all why you are gathered here at this time. A prayer or blessing is shared.
  - Cell phones are probably prohibited in the courthouse, so someone is designated to collect and hold them (and avoid carrying pocket knives).
  - Couples who seek licenses are identified and given license applications to fill out; couples who have been married elsewhere are asked to present a copy of their legal marriage certificates
  - Those couples, and any clergy and elected officials, move to lead a procession into the courthouse, through security, and then waiting until all get through security



### Inside the Courthouse



- Then all go forward into the office of the Clerk, and to whatever office issues marriage license
  - Once in that office, the couples move forward to submit their applications. The Clerk, or staff person, will refuse to grant the license (hopefully saying that only because of the law), but the couples can request that the Clerk keep it on file as a form of historical record, and to create proof that there are couples seeking to be married. [Note: it is entirely possible that not all can fit into the office; if that is so, those who can't should stand quietly and listen as best they can to what is happening inside. Remember other employees still have to work.]
- The married couples offer their certificates, and also request the Clerk to keep them file
- All thank the Clerk. Some groups have developed the custom of giving him or her a candy heart or other symbol of the day (we want to build a relationship with this person). This can even be done with staff in the office, as long as it not disruptive. The Clerk may indicate disagreement or agreement with marriage equality or they may say nothing about it. Whatever they say, the appropriate thing is to be grateful for their time and attention. You may want to say, however, in a pleasant but clear way, that you plan to be back next year, and every year, until marriage equality is legal. All return outside.