

Lack of legal rights makes raising 2 teens more stressful

April 16 2015, byDylan Lovan



In this July 26, 2013 file photo, Michael De Leon, left, and Gregory Bourke speak in Louisville, Ky. Like many dads when his spouse is traveling out of town, Greg Bourke takes on the role of single parent, shuttling two teenage children to basketball practice and other activities while working a full-time job. But Bourke always worries a little when his husband, Michael DeLeon, is away. Kentucky only recognizes DeLeon as the children's parent, since Kentucky doesn't recognize their 2004 Canadian marriage. (AP Photo/Brett Barrouquere, File)

Like many dads, when his spouse is traveling out of town, Greg Bourke takes on the role of single parent, shuttling their two teenagers to basketball practice and other activities while working a full-time job. But Bourke has an extra worry when his husband, Michael DeLeon, is away.

Kentucky only considers DeLeon the children's parent, since the state doesn't recognize their 2004 Canadian marriage.

"I always have this fear of what happens if there's a medical emergency," said Bourke, who is legally a guardian of the two adopted children he's raised with DeLeon for the last 15 years. He's anxious over what might happen if he has to make medical decisions while DeLeon is away.

"This is one of those things if we were legally married in the state, there would be no question about any of this," Bourke said.

The couple has endured a lot of legal wrangling and attorney expenses just to "mimic a marital relationship," as Bourke puts it. If they win their Supreme Court case, their first move will be to seek the state's recognition of Bourke as a legal parent.

Despite the hardships, he said other factors have improved dramatically since they adopted their children.

A ruling last year that struck down a [federal ban](#) on gay marriage means they were able for the first time in three decades together to file a joint tax return, saving them about \$2,900.

"If you think about all those years that we've been together and we've been paying that extra tax," he said, "I almost would have preferred not to have known that because it upsets me now."

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