

# Wedded gays face legal problems

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State law unfairly denies gay couples the right to legally marry, said Ruth Colker, law professor at Tulane University.

As guest lecturer at the UT Law School last week, Colker implored law students to investigate and change sexually discriminatory legal practices.

Because same-sex marriages are not legally recognized, gays are not entitled to the same legal rights as heterosexual couples, she said.

"Gay marriages occur in ceremony only. A committed couple

cannot, under current laws, draw upon any benefits a spouse normally receives," Colker said. "Gay couples are considered second-class citizens.

"Although the laws regarding marriage are not gender-specific, the courts interpret them to say that homosexuals cannot be married," she said. "Nowhere in the definitions are same-sex marriages mentioned."

Colker is a graduate of Harvard law school and an advisor to the American Civil Liberties Union on AIDS and gay and lesbian issues. She is writing a book on abortion and family planning. As an attorney, she has defended discrimination cases

for homosexual couples.

Unlike heterosexual couples, homosexuals cannot receive a partner's social security benefits. They cannot gain U.S. citizenship through marriage. Rarely are they granted inheritance of estates, and after the death of a partner, homosexuals have no right to custody of their children.

If the relatives cannot take the child, it then becomes a ward of the state. Homosexuals are restricted from adopting children as well, Colker said.

"There is a lesbian baby boom going on right now," Colker said. She attributed this to growing acceptance

of homosexuality and the accessibility of artificial insemination.

The president of the Gay and Lesbian Student Union was among several members of the gay community present.

"This program was an excellent way to bring gay rights out of the closet, so to speak," GLSU President Kurt Haas said.

"There is no question that the homophobic treatment of homosexual citizens must be stopped, and what a great opportunity to reach our future lawyers and lawmakers," he said. "I only hope that a major change will be seen in our lifetime." ■