

# MARY BONAUTO

b. June 8, 1961

## LAWYER

*“It’s not about me, it’s about the people in the lawsuits, the plaintiffs and their stories.”*

**Mary Bonauto was lead counsel in legalizing same-sex marriage in Massachusetts and in the fight to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)**

For more than two decades, Mary Bonauto has served as the civil rights project director at Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD). Regarded by The Advocate as “the country’s most powerful lawyer in the marriage equality fight,” Bonauto was lead counsel in legalizing same-sex marriage in Massachusetts and in the fight to overturn the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).

Born into a strict Catholic family in Newburgh, New York, Bonauto graduated from Hamilton College and the Northeastern University School of Law. In 1987, when she joined a small firm in Maine, Bonauto was only one of three openly gay lawyers in private practice in the state.

In 1989, she went to work for GLAD. She helped enforce Massachusetts’s new law protecting gays and lesbians from discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations. Bonauto was involved in litigation, lobbying and public education throughout New England.

She served as co-counsel in *Baker v. Vermont*, which challenged the state’s prohibition of same-sex marriage. The landmark 1999 ruling mandated in Vermont the country’s first civil unions with legal benefits similar to marriage.

Bonauto was lead counsel in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, the litigation for marriage equality in Massachusetts. In 2003, the state’s highest court became the first in the nation to legalize same-sex marriage.

Bonauto led GLAD’s successful challenge to overturn DOMA in *Gill v. Office of Personnel Management*. In a 3-0 decision, the lower court ruling was upheld by the United States Court of Appeals, laying the groundwork for review by the United States Supreme Court.

In 2011, Boston Magazine named Bonauto one of the city’s “50 Most Powerful Women.” She was awarded Yale University’s Brudner prize for her contributions to the LGBT community. She has served as co-chair of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee of the American Bar Association.

Bonauto lives in Portland, Maine, with her partner of 23 years and their twin daughters.



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