

Clinton asks justices to overturn law he signed

by [David Jackson](#) in the [April 3, 2013](#) issue

It's not every day that an ex-president asks the Supreme Court to strike down a law he signed.

That's what Bill Clinton did with the Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as between a man and a woman—and which the high court will rule on this year in a landmark moment for the gay marriage movement.

The justices must decide whether the Defense of Marriage Act “is consistent with the principles of a nation that honors freedom, equality and justice above all, and is therefore constitutional,” Clinton wrote in the *Washington Post*. He adds: “As the president who signed the act into law, I have come to believe that DOMA is contrary to those principles and, in fact, incompatible with our Constitution.”

Clinton says that when he signed the law in 1996, “it was a very different time.” No state then recognized same-sex marriage, but some were considering it—and congressional opponents were proposing “quite draconian” responses, the 42nd president writes.

“As a bipartisan group of former senators stated in their March 1 amicus brief to the Supreme Court, many supporters of the bill known as DOMA believed that its passage ‘would defuse a movement to enact a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, which would have ended the debate for a generation or more,’” Clinton states.

Now nine states and the District of Columbia sanction gay marriage, but same-sex couples even there are denied rights available to others, Clinton notes; they “cannot file their taxes jointly, take unpaid leave to care for a sick or injured spouse or receive equal family health and pension benefits as federal civilian employees.”

The Supreme Court decision is expected in late June. —*USA Today*

This article was edited on March 21, 2013.