

Conservative Jews' shift on gay rites causes no stir

by [Lauren Markoe](#) in the [July 11, 2012](#) issue

The Conservative Jewish movement established guidelines in early June for the marriage of gay and lesbian couples. The reaction so far? Hard to find.

Asked if there had been any pushback, Rabbi Julie Schonfeld, executive vice president of the movement's Rabbinical Assembly, said "just the opposite."

"There is a tremendous sense of appreciation, of celebration," Schonfeld said. "The guidance is considered thoughtful and helpful to do what it was intended to do . . . to bring sanctity between people who want to build a Jewish home."

Conservative Judaism, which sits between the more liberal Reform and the more traditional Orthodox, lifted the ban on the ordination of gay rabbis in 2006.

As for same-sex marriages, it has been 12 years since the Reform movement of Judaism—largest within the U.S.—gave rabbis the right to perform same-sex marriages. For years, though, some Conservative rabbis have also been performing these marriages.

The new guidelines outline two possible marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples, which clergy are free to adapt. The guidelines passed the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards by a 13-0 vote, with one abstention.

Schonfeld said there are rabbis within the Conservative movement who do not want to perform same-sex marriages. It should be clear that they don't have to. "We are a big-tent movement," she said. —RNS