



**Internal Services Agency  
Clerk/Recorder Department**

Frederick B. Garcia  
County Clerk/Recorder

Terry Schutten, County Executive  
Mark Norris, Agency Administrator

**County of Sacramento**

**NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Wanda Dark  
Assistant County Clerk/Recorder (916) 874-8884  
[darkw@saccounty.net](mailto:darkw@saccounty.net)

**Getting married? Give your last name some extra thought before you tie the knot!**

Common law has traditionally and exclusively governed the naming conventions for couples getting married. That will change on January 1, 2009, in California thanks to The Name Equality Act of 2007 (AB 102, Chapter 567, Statutes of 2007) which makes fundamental changes to existing law.

Couples are required to select their married names at the time they apply for and purchase their marriage license. Whatever new name(s) are listed on the marriage license are the legal names that each spouse will go by after they marry. Changing a name AFTER the license is issued and BEFORE a couple marries will require the purchase of a new license. Changing a name AFTER a couple is married will require that the couple go to court for a name change, a costly expense.

This new law applies to the changing of the middle or last name on a marriage license. Neither spouse may change their first names using this process. The following conventions may be used for either spouse's new middle or last names:

- The current last name of the other spouse
- The last name of either spouse given at birth
- A name combining into a single last name all or a segment of the current last name, or the last name of either spouse given at birth
- A hyphenated combination of last names

The above last names may be used in whole or in part where the part is a segment of the name. A segment is a contiguous (adjacent, neighboring) portion of the name; it is an identifiable match of a portion of the current last name or the last name given at birth of either spouse. The segment may not omit or add new letters and the letters may not be changed around to create an entirely different segment that does not match a portion of the current last name or the last name given at birth of either spouse.

Of special concern is that a marriage certificate is used by multiple local, state, federal and private agencies all of whom have different rules and/or regulations regarding what documents are acceptable to change a name on their records following a marriage. Couples may want to contact these agencies to verify their requirements prior to applying for their marriage license.

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