# Thailand now recognises same-sex marriages and adoption



Thailand is poised to recognise same-sex marriages beginning January 22, 2025, following the passage of a landmark marriage equality bill by Parliament the previous year. This historic legislation positions Thailand as the first country in Southeast Asia and the third in Asia to officially acknowledge the marriages of same-sex couples, marking a significant milestone in the region's legal landscape.

Among those directly impacted by this change are American businessman Jacob Holder, 45, and his Thai husband, Surapong "Keng" Koonpaew, 48. The couple first met in 2021 and wed in the United States in 2023. Upon returning to Thailand, they became a family when they welcomed their son, Elijah Bprin Holder Koonpaew, through legal surrogacy in Colombia, as this option is not available for same-sex couples in Thailand.

Despite this progress, the couple faces challenges due to existing legal frameworks that do not fully support their family structure. As reported, Elijah, who is now 18 months old, holds a birth certificate featuring both his parents' names from the United States but is currently residing in Thailand on a tourist visa. Under Thai law, the absence of a legal recognition for same-sex parental connections means that Surapong does not have any legal rights concerning his son, which presents significant concerns for the family's stability.

Jacob Holder expressed his apprehension, stating, "Legally, they have no connection. If tomorrow, God forbid, something did happen to me, we have real concerns (about) what then happens between Keng and our son under the eyes of the Thai law." The couple's situation highlights the limitations of the new marriage equality law, which, while historic, does not resolve issues related to parental rights for same-sex couples.

Nevertheless, the marriage equality bill does include provisions allowing same-sex couples to adopt children. However, these adoptions will be contingent upon criteria established by authorities, raising concerns about potential discrimination in the adoption process.

As noted by Mookdapa Yangyuenpradorn from the human rights group Fortify Rights, attempts were made during the legislative debate to update the legal definition of a parent to a more inclusive, gender-neutral term. However, these proposals were ultimately rejected, reflecting the prevailing societal attitudes that continue to affect legal reform. "This is the mindset that's very much imbued in the eyes of the lawmakers (and) within the text of the law itself as well," she commented.

Analysts believe that the new law could foster a broader movement towards greater inclusion for LGBTQ+ individuals in Thailand, a country often perceived as relatively tolerant of the community. Nada Chaiyajit, a lecturer at Mae Fah Luang University's law school, remarked, "We have come far in changing the law and there is some way to go for more inclusion."

Looking ahead, both Jacob and Surapong are planning to expand their family further. Expressing a hope for societal acceptance of their family unit, Surapong stated, "We want these people (lawmakers) to see that we can have a normal functioning family, just like everybody else." Their journey encapsulates the ongoing movement for equality and recognition for same-sex families within Thailand, a nation at the threshold of significant change in its approach to LGBTQ+ rights.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recognition_of_same-sex_unions_in_Thailand> - Corroborates the passage of the marriage equality bill, its approval by the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the law's effective date of 23 January 2025.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recognition_of_same-sex_unions_in_Thailand> - Confirms Thailand as the first country in Southeast Asia and the second in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage, and the provisions allowing same-sex couples to adopt children.
* <https://www.bangkokpost.com/life/social-and-lifestyle/2861948/siblings-divided-by-law> - Details the challenges faced by Jacob Holder and Surapong Koonpaew, including the lack of legal recognition for same-sex parental connections and the use of surrogacy in Colombia.
* <https://www.bangkokpost.com/life/social-and-lifestyle/2861948/siblings-divided-by-law> - Highlights the legal discrepancies and ongoing challenges for same-sex families in Thailand, such as Surapong's lack of legal rights concerning his son.
* <https://thailand.prd.go.th/en/content/category/detail/id/48/iid/356609> - Provides information on the Equal Marriage Law, its implementation date, and the rights it grants to same-sex couples, including adoption and inheritance.
* <https://thailand.prd.go.th/en/content/category/detail/id/48/iid/356609> - Confirms that Thailand will be the 37th country globally, the first in Southeast Asia, and the third in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage.
* <https://www.bangkokpost.com/life/social-and-lifestyle/2861948/siblings-divided-by-law> - Mentions the efforts to amend the law to include more inclusive, gender-neutral terms for guardianship and the ongoing advocacy for full legal recognition of same-sex families.
* <https://www.asiaone.com/asia/historic-thai-law-recognises-same-sex-marriages-not-all-families-are-equal> - Discusses the historic nature of the law and the remaining challenges for same-sex families, including the lack of full legal recognition for parental rights.
* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recognition_of_same-sex_unions_in_Thailand> - Details the legislative process and the royal assent received by the Marriage Equality Act, as well as plans for mass wedding ceremonies on the law's effective date.