



Gay rights champion Edith Windsor dead at 88

By Brian Troutman

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NEW YORK, NEW YORK -- Gay rights icon Edith Windsor passed away Tuesday at age 88 in Manhattan. She is survived by her wife, Judith Kasen-Windsor, who confirmed the death but did not give a cause, according to the [New York Times](#).

Windsor was the Plaintiff in the landmark gay-rights decision *Windsor v. United States*, which struck down parts of the Defense of Marriage Act.

Before the Supreme Court struck it down, DOMA restricted the federal government from conferring marriage benefits to same-sex spouses. According to the Government Accountability Office, there were 1,138 such benefits.

Windsor sued the government after the IRS forced her to pay over \$360,000 in estate taxes when her spouse, Thea Spyer, died in 2009.

Edie, as she was known to family and friends, had been living with Spyer for 40 years before the two married in Canada in 2007.

"Married is a magic word," Ms. Windsor told a rally outside City Hall in New York a few days before her wife died. "And it is magic throughout the world. It has to do with our dignity as human beings, to be who we are openly."

Had Windsor been married to a man, she would have been exempt from federal estate taxes.

Windsor claimed that DOMA violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution by singling out same-sex marriage partners.

While the Supreme Court sided with Windsor in a 5-4 decision, they did not overturn bans on gay marriage, which were in place in 37 states across the country. This limited the reach of the Windsor decision to the 13 states and District of Columbia which recognized same-sex marriage.

Still, it was a step forward for marriage equality, which would come two years later in another landmark Supreme Court decision, *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

"Edie Windsor is a hero and civil rights icon who pushed our country closer to the promise of a more perfect union," said HRC President Chad Griffin. "Future generations will learn how she faced down discrimination with courage and defiance, and boldly challenged the United States government."

After the Windsor decision was announced, President Obama personally called Windsor to congratulate her on the victory. She also served as a grand marshal of New York City's L.G.B.T. Pride March in 2013.

New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio took to Twitter after news of Windsor's death broke, writing: "The arc of the moral universe bends toward justice. But sometimes it needs a good kick in the ass from people like Edie Windsor."

