FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NEA honors Jim Obergefell for victorious fight in Supreme Court case Obergefell v. Hodges
Annual gala also marks 50th anniversary of the NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner

BOSTON—For his monumental fight in the landmark case that legalized same-sex marriage across the nation, Obergefell v. Hodges, Jim Obergefell is being awarded the National Education Association’s Virginia Uribe Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights.

Since 1967, NEA has recognized and honored those who have fought — and continue to fight — for human and civil rights. This year, NEA honored the outstanding work of 12 American social justice heroes at its annual Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner on Saturday, July 1, in Boston. The theme of the awards dinner is, “Living the Legacy: After 50 Years, Still We Rise.”

“Jim Obergefell embodies the spirit of Dr. Maya Angelou’s beloved poem ‘Still I rise,’” said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. “Through his deeds and actions, this human and civil rights hero is still rising and carrying the torch forward. Tonight, we renew our commitment to stand for racial and social justice and pledge to continue to shed a light on his work as he guides and inspires us all.”

After Obergefell’s partner of 20 years, John, died from a grave illness, Obergefell fought to legalize same-sex marriage across the nation in a case that was eventually heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court ruled in his favor in Obergefell v. Hodges, the case that secured the right of same-sex couples to celebrate their love and commitment to each other.

The impact of Obergefell v. Hodges is being felt nationwide: Same-sex marriages have increased by 33 percent since the ruling. Obergefell’s advocacy has also encouraged LGBTQ students to embrace their identity and affirmed their right to proudly speak out for themselves and love whomsoever they choose.

Since the landmark decision, Obergefell has written the novel Love Wins with Pulitzer Prize-winner Debbie Cenziper. It tells the story of Obergefell as well as the lawyers, judges and activists behind Obergefell v. Hodges. Obergefell is continuing his advocacy for the LGBTQ community on a national and international level, most recently focusing on the transgender community.

Jim Obergefell is one of many pioneers in the fight for equality within the LGBTQ community. He continues to advocate for change in America and abroad to make the world a safer place for all people.

To read his full bio, please click here. See moving video of Obergefell’s fight for same sex marriage here.

This year, NEA also recognized the anniversary of its merger with the American Teachers Association, which represented black teachers in segregated school systems in the South. ATA originally created the Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner, and, as part of the merger, NEA continues this dinner tradition 50 years later.

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The National Education Association is the nation’s largest professional employee organization, representing more than 3 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.

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