

A Supreme Achievement

U.S. Supreme Court cites Pollvogt's work in historic ruling.

June 26, 2015. It was one of the biggest days of Associate Professor Susannah Pollvogt's career — decades in the making. It managed to come as a complete surprise.

On that date, the U.S. Supreme Court announced its landmark 5-4 decision to legalize same-sex marriage. The outcome was huge news for Pollvogt, whose work has included marriage equality, in one way or another, for 20 years. But it turns out the ruling was just the beginning.

"We're all anticipating: Is today the day we get the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision? And then they issue it, and everybody's reading and reading and reading," Pollvogt said. "Then a friend texted me and said, 'Oh my God. The Court cited your brief.'"

Pollvogt teamed up with Catherine Smith (DU Law) and Tanya Washington (Georgia State Law) on the amicus curiae brief, a work contributed by a "friend of the Court" to advise on a case. For months, they crafted their argument that same-sex marriage bans deny children key legal, social, and economic rights. The trio submitted the brief in March 2015. Then they waited.

Not until June 26 did they find out — along with the rest of the country — that their work had made the cut. A record 149 briefs were filed, but fewer than 10 were cited in the majority opinion, Pollvogt's among them.

"I was shocked, because of the number of briefs filed. And I just felt incredibly proud. I felt like the motive for the three of us was really to have people think about the impact of discrimination of this type on kids," she said.

"There is a whole industry for filing amicus briefs. You've got these tony, East Coast, white-shoe law firms working on these. And this was literally three law professors writing on their laptops."

It's been an exhilarating, gratifying ride for Pollvogt personally. But she finds it just as thrilling to know what her students might take from the achievement.



Meet Susannah Pollvogt

Joined Washburn Law

August 2014

Titles

- Associate Professor
- Director, Academic Skills and Bar Passage

Courses

- Constitutional Law I
- Legal Analysis in Context — Torts
- Mastering Legal Analysis

Why Washburn Law

"I do academic support and bar passage work, and I'm very, very passionate about that work. And I really felt like the law school met me at the same level of passion, in terms of being extremely student-centered."

"I think one of the most powerful messages coming out of this experience is that the quality of your writing matters," she said. "Lawyers have a chance to make a difference, and we should all be very proud of that. It's a tremendous privilege."