

## In historic move || Habayit Hayehudi to support bill granting tax breaks to same-sex parents

Religiously-oriented party, which set forward two proposals to solve inconsistencies while staving off de facto recognition of same-sex couples, says wording of final law will be different.

By Jonathan Lis | 23:28 03.12.13 | 0

Habayit Hayehudi yesterday decided to support a bill that would grant tax exemptions to same-sex parents, after vehemently trying to topple the bill with a compromise draft of its own. The bill, sponsored by Yesh Atid MK Adi Kol, will be brought for a preliminary vote in the Knesset on Wednesday.

The proposal grants same-sex parents the same tax credits for children that are given to heterosexual parents. Habayit Hayehudi fears that Yesh Atid's proposal may be viewed by courts as de facto recognition of same-sex couples by the Knesset. Therefore, the party had insisted that the discriminatory tax law be rectified by a special amendment in the tax code, rather than through legislation.

Habayit Hayehudi sources said late Tuesday that although the original draft would be the one brought before the Knesset on Wednesday, the wording would be changed in the future before the next vote, and would be based on an understanding of principles that would be reached in the future between the two sides.

At present, half the tax credit points for married couples for a child up to the age of 18 are granted to the wife only. That means that homosexual couples are not eligible for the credit, which in 2013 amounted to up to NIS 2,616 a year per child.

Habayit Hayehudi's first proposal stipulated that the half point granted until now to mothers be divided equally between the two parents, regardless of their gender.

"Until now the wife received half a credit point in order to encourage women to go out and work," said a Habayit Hayehudi spokesperson after the proposal was submitted. "If the purpose is not to encourage women to work, but to grant a benefit as a parent, it should be divided equally between the two partners."

But unlike Yesh Atid's proposal, the law would not refer to same-sex parents specifically, the spokesperson said.

The second proposal grants a full credit point to two men who are married and parents of a child. "We'll compromise a little and leave female couples a double number of credits and do the same for a male couple," said the Habayit Hayehudi spokesperson, explaining the surprising step. In this case too, the credit will be granted indirectly, without any specific recognition of same-sex parents.

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Yesh Atid rejected Habayit Hayehudi's proposals shortly after they were submitted, with Kol saying they could not be implemented.

Habayit Hayehudi initially threatened to use its veto power to quash the legislation. Under the coalition agreement, a coalition partner has the right to veto any bill that upsets the status quo on religion and state.

Finance Minister Yair Lapid, the chairman of Yesh Atid, yesterday slammed Habayit Hayehudi's threat to use its veto power. "I'll take it to the cabinet and have them explain to me how that is a state and religion issue," Lapid said on Army Radio. "I don't see anyone coming forward and saying he's in favor of penalizing children because their parents belong to the gay community," he said.

Kol said that Habayit Hayehudi had "gotten confused. Not only have they taken upon themselves to determine what pertains to state and religion, overturned the basic right for equality and subordinated it to Jewish law, but now they think they have a higher legislative authority than the government."

Habayit Hayehudi said late Tuesday that a decision had been reached that the bill would be advanced only with the agreement of all of the factions in the coalition, and appraise that the new draft would not actually contain the phrase "couples of the same sex" nor recognition of homosexual couples.

Yesh Atid, however, clarified that no agreement whatsoever had been reached with Habayit Hayehudi on amendments to the draft and that it had no intention of retracting the original wording explicitly recognizing same-sex marriages.