

Israeli ministers back tax breaks for gay parents, reversing last week's 'no' vote

Bill submitted after Tax Authority refused requests of male couples for credits granted to heterosexual parents.

By Jonathan Lis | Dec. 2, 2013 | 6:37 AM

[Tweet](#)

The government plans to support a bill that would grant the same income tax credits to homosexual parents as those given to heterosexual ones.

The Ministerial Committee on Legislation voted on Sunday in favor of the proposal, just a week after voting down the same measure. Sunday's vote was in response to an appeal by Justice Minister Tzipi Livni and Finance Minister Yair Lapid and paves the way for official coalition support for the bill, which will grant same-sex couples with children the same tax credits enjoyed by heterosexual parents. Culture and Sports Minister Limor Livnat (Likud) also lodged a similar appeal.

MK Adi Kol (Yesh Atid) had submitted the bill to change Israel's tax code after the Tax Authority refused the requests of a number of male couples for tax credits granted to parents given to the children of their heterosexual counterparts.

The Tax Code grants different child credits to men and women; thus couples comprising two male parents do not receive the same benefits as heterosexual or lesbian couples.

The Tax Authority said in its rejection that the wording of the law is quite clear: the exemptions are provided only to women.

Ministers from Yisrael Beiteinu and two ministers from Habayit Hayehudi, Housing and Construction Minister Uri Ariel and Pensioner Affairs Minister Uri Orbach, opposed the proposal when it was first brought before the legislative committee.

A senior figure in Habayit Hayehudi said: "This is a change in the status quo that we will not agree to. But the action we'll be taking on the matter remains to be seen."

Ariel claimed Kol's goal was simply to protest and challenge current understandings on such issues, while Orbach called it an attempt to recognize single-sex marriages through the back door.

The present coalition agreements give Habayit Hayehudi the right to veto any legislation that changes the status quo on matters of religion and state, but it is not clear whether the issue of tax credits for same-sex couples under the Tax Code falls within this category allowing the use of this veto.

"The proposed law is a clear and strong message that the State of Israel views same-sex couples as parents in every way and manner, as a legitimate family unit," said Kol. The time has come to cancel the serious economic discrimination facing same-sex couples, she added.

Lapid praised the legislative committee's approval of the bill: "[The bill] has nothing to do with religion and state; it is human rights legislation that should be passed into law."

Health Minister Yael German, also of Yesh Atid, called the bill "an attempt to do justice for a sector that is discriminated against."

The value of a single exemption for one child is up to NIS 2,616 a year depending on a number of factors, including income, though this sum can even be higher under certain circumstances. All told, for a family with a number of children, these sums can in some cases even add up to hundreds of thousands of shekels by the time the children reach 18 and the benefit expires.