

1999

LAWYERS
OF THE
YEAR

DEBORAH H. WALD In an increasingly convoluted area of family law San Francisco attorney Deborah H. Wald significantly expanded the rights of gay parents. In March San Francisco Superior Court Judge Donna Hitchens granted a groundbreaking prebirth decree to a lesbian couple, giving them the same legal rights to their son as married heterosexual parents possess. Prior to this ruling one gay parent would have to go through a complicated process of a second-parent adoption to gain legal rights to the child.

The lesbian couple who won the decree tried to mirror the reproductive process of a heterosexual couple so as to win equal legal rights: The woman who carried the child to term was implanted with a fertilized egg donated by her partner. Since this decision, Wald, who is a sole practitioner with a specialty in criminal appeals, has secured similar decrees for other lesbian couples.