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Are You and Your Partner Ready to Sign a Lease on Your Own Marriage?

Brian O'Connell

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NEW YORK ([TheStreet](#)) -- Can a marriage be like a lease?

Or perhaps a better question: *Should* a marriage be like a lease?

Leave it to a lawyer to even broach the subject, which is exactly what Paul Rampell, a Palm Beach, Fla., attorney did last week in a [Washington Post opinion piece](#).

Rampell proposes the idea of "wedleases" -- a marriage contract that places an expiration date agreed upon by the spouses. The duration could be one year, five years, 10 years -- whatever the "loving couple" deem appropriate.

If at the end of the wedding lease, the couple decides things are going well, the lease can be renewed, again for a specific period. But if the marriage has turned sour, the couple can call it quits without having to go through the messy -- and expensive -- process of divorce.

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Along the way, the couple may [buy items together or separately](#) and can agree on the disposal of those items in the event of dissolution of the marriage contract. Rampell isn't exactly clear on how a couple would handle the co-ownership of a house. Presumably, assets would be sold back to a spouse, along with a split of any profits, based on the amount of money each spouse pours into the deal.

Rampell uses the contract between a landlord and a tenant as a model for a wedlease, as those contracts do a good job of separating ownership of property and who walks away with what at the end of a lease.

If you think that breaks the "lock" part of wedlock, you're on the right track.

Wedding leases are inspired by those who want to "try out" marriage without the long-term commitment -- "and good luck with that," says April Masini, a relationship expert and founder of [AskApril.com](#).

Masini isn't sure wedding leases are even enforceable.

"Anyone who's signed a legally binding prenuptial or, as they're called in some states, postnuptial agreements, knows the legality of the document is usually tested in a court," she says. "In other words, not all agreements that are intended to be legally binding and are drafted and overseen by attorneys, are. Prenups are overturned regularly by courts and found to be not binding or unenforceable."

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On an emotional level, Masini is against wedding leases because they lack two elements needed for any successful long-term relationship: commitment and character.

"As for the intention of wedleases, they're ridiculous because they basically let you off the hook for commitment," she says. "Anyone care to comment on the damage done to people -- including children born during the wedlease agreement term?"

John Olivieri, a partner in the Private Clients Practice Group at law firm **White & Case**, agrees, adding that wedding leases could work on a legal basis, but not on a human relations basis. "The agreement could be worded such that, if the parties **divorce** within a given period of time, they each keep their own assets and/or do not owe each other alimony," he says. "Legally, such an agreement could work out."

"But there are always complications, especially when there are children," he adds. "It would be hard -- if not impossible -- to contract out of all the problems that arise with custody and child support, for example. All these agreements may offer is a the false promise of a early divorce."

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