

Election 2004

MARRIAGE AMENDMENT

Kentuckians pass measure banning same-sex unions

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The Courier-Journal

Kentucky voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment yesterday that bans civil unions and same-sex marriage.

Approximately 75 percent of voters cast ballots in favor of the amendment.

"I think the people of Kentucky agreed that marriage is between a man and a woman," said Jeff Klusmeier, communications director of the group

Yes for Traditional Marriage.

He said the vote — with similar results expected in all or most of 10 other states deciding on similar amendments — sends a rebuff to the high court in Massachusetts, which ordered that state to become the first in the nation to authorize same-sex marriages.

"As a culture we've got to uphold the sanctity of marriage and send a message to our children and to the rest of the nation," Klusmeier said.

Despite vast support for the amendment, opponents of it

AMENDMENT 1 DEFINE MARRIAGE

3,469 of 3,482 precincts (99%)

Yes	1,213,419	(75%)
No.....	413,759	(25%)

cheered last night at what seemed like a victory party at The Alternative nightclub in Louisville

"We were able to mobilize over 2,500 volunteers, walking door to door, talking to voters

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about basic liberties for all Kentuckians," said Sarah Reece, manager for the NO on the Amendment campaign. "We brought gay equality into the conversations of every household in Kentucky. That's a huge victory."

The amendment, approved by the Kentucky legislature in April, states "that only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be a marriage in Kentucky, and that a legal status identical to or similar to marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized."

Even though Kentucky state law already bans gay marriage, advocates of the ballot measure sought a constitutional amendment to prevent Kentucky judges from following the same path as those in Massachusetts. Advocates of the amendment

drew on religious arguments against homosexuality and contended that allowing gay marriage would increase the breakdown of traditional two-parent families.

Foes' arguments

Opponents said the measure stigmatizes homosexuals and is unnecessary because Kentucky has a conservative judiciary that is unlikely to overturn the state law banning same-sex marriage.

They also said religious morality should not dictate civil law.

And they said that because the amendment also bans legal recognition of any relationship similar to marriage, courts might void laws granting unmarried persons certain rights in child-custody disputes and cases of domestic violence.

Amendment supporters said such concerns are groundless and that the measure was de-

signed only to define marriage.

Kent Ostrander of the statewide group Vote Yes for Marriage said he had feared these allegations would draw away support for the measure.

"I'm not surprised that we were going to win, but I'm pleased with the margin," he said.

He predicted that opponents of the amendment will challenge it in a federal lawsuit. "That's one of the reasons we need both state and federal amendments," he said.

NO on the Amendment leaders last night declined to say if they planned any challenges, saying only that this campaign was part of a larger struggle to spread awareness of gay-rights issues.

"What we learned through this campaign is that slowly and surely, people were coming to the table and having those con-

versations," said campaign co-chair Darnell Johnson.

Yesterday's voting drew some allegations of irregularities, according to amendment opponents and voters interviewed by The Courier-Journal. For example, they said poll workers in one district in Louisville and two others in Daviess County encouraged voters to support the amendment. But there was no evidence of any widespread or systematic effort.

Widespread support

Polls by The Courier-Journal before the election showed support for the amendment among almost every category of voter. Support was stronger in rural areas, among those who don't personally know a gay person, among older voters and among those who identify themselves as evangelical or born-again Christians.

The Kentucky Families for Fairness political issue committee, which ran the NO campaign, raised nearly \$368,000, according to an Associated Press review of records filed with the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance.

Groups in favor of the amendment raised a combined \$69,810.

But large Christian organizations also mobilized on behalf of the amendment, including organizations representing Baptists and Catholics, the two largest denominations in Kentucky.

Southeast Christian Church, the state's largest congregation, also launched a \$150,000 advertising campaign, which never mentioned the amendment but declared marriage to be the union of a man and a woman.

Smaller religious groups and individual religious leaders opposed the amendment.