

Kentucky House GOP tries to force vote on gay-marriage ban

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FRANKFORT, Ky. — House Republican leaders carried out an unusual parliamentary maneuver yesterday to force a floor vote today on banning same-sex marriages.

The Republican leaders filed a petition signed by 26 members of their caucus to force a committee to release House Bill 95, which calls for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages.

"This is an opportunity for all members to go on record of where they stand," said House Republican Leader Jeff Hoover of Jamestown. "We think it should be debated in the open and not hidden in committee, which is what the

Democratic leadership has chosen to do with this so far."

The bill was filed Jan. 6, the opening day of the legislative session. It was referred to the Elections, Constitutional Amendments and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee, where it has yet to get a hearing.

Under House rules, a "discharge" petition signed by at least 25 members to release a bill from a committee can be called to a vote of the full House. If 51 or more members vote yes, the bill moves out of the committee to the House Rules Committee, which can schedule it for a floor vote or refer it to another committee.

"I believe the vote on the discharge petition will give everyone a pretty good idea of how the whole body will vote" on the bill, said House Republi-

can Whip Ken Upchurch of Monticello.

But House Speaker Jody Richards, D-Bowling Green, said that House Democratic leaders are not blocking consideration of the bill in committee and that the discharge petition is a political move by minority Republicans.

Richards said he is philosophically in favor of the amendment. But he said consideration of all constitutional amendments was being delayed until after Monday's deadline for filing new bills. House leaders traditionally wait to consider constitutional amendment bills until all have been filed because only four such amendments can be put on the November ballot.

"We're going to have a hearing on all constitutional amendments and see what kind of support they've got after all of them have been filed," Richards

said.

Richards said he would vote against the discharge petition "because I'm never for circumventing our committee system," and he said the motion would be easily defeated. Democrats hold a 64-36 majority in the House.

House Democratic Whip Joe Barrows of Versailles agreed with Richards. "I'm not sure you'll see any Democrats vote for the discharge petition," he said.

But some other House Democrats said the vote might be close.

Not all Republicans favor the measure. "I'm not in favor of mucking with our constitution," said Rep. Tim Feeley, R-Crestwood.

Staff writer **Al Cross** contributed to this story.