



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 5, 2011

Marriage Amendment Moves Ahead in Minnesota Legislature

The Minnesota legislature appears to be closer than ever to passing a state constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman. On April 29, barely a week after a bill was introduced in the Republican-controlled State Senate, the bill passed out of committee, moving the proposed amendment a step closer to being placed on the 2012 ballot in the state, where a survey by the conservative Minnesota Family Council shows that 56 percent of voters think marriage should be defined as only between a man and a woman.



The Senate Judiciary Committee approved the bill 8-4, with, predictably, all Republicans in favor and all Democrats opposed. Moreover, reported the [Associated Press](#), passage by “the full Senate and the House appears likely with solid Republican majorities in both chambers, meaning voters in 2012 would be asked to enshrine in Minnesota’s Constitution a prohibition on same-sex marriage that already exists in state law.”

But while the state Supreme Court has upheld the decades old law that effectively bans same-sex marriage, that didn’t prevent “gay” activists from attempting to push a law through the state legislature last year to legalize homosexual unions, a move that, while unsuccessful, had conservative leaders pointing out the importance of protecting marriage through a constitutional mandate. According to the St. Paul [Pioneer-Press](#), Republican State Senator Warren Limmer, one of the state’s leading pro-marriage legislators, warned that without such protection the danger would continue of “allowing a number of politicians or, heaven forbid, activist judges to decide what marriage should be.”

Predictably, noted the paper, the state’s Democratic lawmakers responded by calling the legislation “a divisive distraction to the issue that leaders of both parties have agreed is top priority right now: passing a state budget. ‘What family does this help in Minnesota, especially in this time of need?’ asked Sen. Scott Dibble ... answering the question himself: ‘Absolutely no one.’”

Before the vote the Senate committee held hearings on the measure, which attracted religious leaders from both sides of the issue. Proponents of the amendment included a Catholic bishop, a Lutheran pastor, a Muslim imam, and a Jewish rabbi, all stressing that “any legal stamp on gay relationships might force religious institutions to adapt to legal rights that go against their doctrines,” reported the AP.

The Rev. Tom Parrish, pastor of a conservative Lutheran congregation in Minneapolis, testified that should homosexual marriage be legalized in the state, “it will mean that Christians and people of conscience of other religious traditions will be labeled and treated like pariahs. Parrish noted that marriage between a man and a woman “is the one universal, common thread throughout the world and throughout history,” adding that legalizing same-sex unions would “continually confuse and alienate us



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from one another and force those who believe in God's word to be lawbreakers by refusing to recognize or conduct same-sex marriages."

Religious leaders testifying in favor of homosexual marriage included an Episcopal priest, a Methodist pastor, and a Jewish rabbi, Adam Spilker, who testified, "To put morality to an up-or-down vote is to risk the majority imposing their religious views on the minority." Also offering his displeasure over the amendment via a letter was the Minneapolis bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a Christian denomination which in the last year has caved in to pressure from homosexual activists to allow openly homosexual clergy as well as the ecclesiastical blessing of same-sex relationships.

The conflicting views from religious leaders prompted Democratic Senator John Marty, who opposes the amendment, to ask the committee: "Are we going to change the Constitution to pick certain religious views and put them out there? When I say the Bible that I read encourages same-sex marriages, a number of your witnesses would be bothered by that. They read it differently, and they have a right to."

On the judicial side, St. Paul attorney Jane Bowman insisted that existing laws—and the state Supreme Court ruling upholding them—make the proposed amendment "redundant and unnecessary," to which attorney Austin Nimocks of the pro-marriage [Alliance Defense Fund](#) pointed out that there was no guarantee that future courts would not use their power to overturn such laws. "The next Minnesota court challenged with this demand may not demonstrate the same level of judicial restraint," Nimocks said, adding, "The Constitution is the people's document, and they are entitled to change it."

While the state's Democratic governor Mark Dayton, who replaced the vocally pro-family Tim Pawlenty in the last election, said that he would "strongly oppose" the amendment, things have changed drastically since 2006, when State Senator Michele Bachmann proposed the same marriage amendment before a Democrat-controlled legislature — guaranteeing an eventual defeat for the measure.

With conservative majorities in both legislative houses, and an electorate that appears more eager than ever to cast their important vote for traditional marriage, the amendment appears to have a very good chance of passage by the people of Minnesota, which is what the state's pro-family forces desire.

"This is about letting the people vote," said the Minnesota Family Council's Chuck Darrell, who noted that the most recent state polls showed that 74 percent of Minnesotans believe it should be up to them to decide on how marriage should be defined in their state. He pointed out that the poll, taken in January, also found that 56 percent of voters said marriage should be defined as between one man and one woman. "Clearly, this survey shows that voters want to vote on a marriage amendment," he said.

While supporters of the measure remained "cautiously optimistic" that it would pass both houses, even among GOP legislators the amendment was not without its detractors, including State Representative John Kriesel, who told the Minneapolis [Star-Tribune](#): "People fight to find happiness. You find someone you love and now other people are saying because I don't consider that normal, you can't do it?" Kriesel assured homosexual activists that he was "working hard" to derail the measure.

On May 2 the House civil law committee approved the measure after an emotional hearing during which Democratic Representative Steve Simon, a supporter of same-sex marriage, expressed his exasperation at the proposed amendment, wondering how many homosexual people "does God have to create before we ask ourselves whether or not God actually wants them around," a comment that elicited thunderous applause from the crowd of mostly "gay" activists in the gallery.

Also speaking at the House hearing was a local black pastor, the Rev. Bob Battle, who has been a vocal proponent of traditional marriage over the past several years. Addressing those who seek to compare



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the campaign for homosexual rights with the civil rights crusades of the past, Battle told the committee, "Gay marriage advocates have attempted to hijack the civil rights movement. I know what civil rights are, and gays in America have all the civil rights as anyone else." He added, however, that "God gave marriage as a gift to Adam and Eve."

In the same hearing, conservative law professor Teresa Collett from nearby University of St. Thomas pointed out that the amendment effort is not about denying individuals of a right, but as proposed the measure "would simply allow the voters of this state to define who is eligible to marry in this state. It does not ... write discrimination into the State Constitution."

While past efforts by pro-family forces in the state have boiled down to an aggressive campaign to bludgeon one and all with facts and figures about the need to protect traditional marriage, this time around the strategy has focused on the mantra of "Let the People vote," with proponents understanding that should the measure succeed in the legislature, they will have roughly eighteen months to re-enforce their message and encourage the people of Minnesota to cast their ballot for the amendment.

Emphasized the Minnesota Family Council's Chuck Darrell: "It's time for the legislature to give them the chance."



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