



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on July 25, 2012

Poll Shows Minn. Marriage Amendment Maintains Lead With November Voters

Despite the presence of major Minnesota corporations like Target and General Mills on the other side of the debate, the proposed Minnesota constitutional amendment that would define marriage as only between a man and a woman is maintaining a 15-point lead in surveys of likely voters. The poll, conducted jointly by SurveyUSA and local television station KSTP, found that 52 percent of voters said they would vote for the amendment, compared to 37 percent who said they would vote against it. Another six percent were unsure, and five percent said they would not vote on the measure.



According to the [St. Paul Pioneer Press](#), the latest poll contradicts a June survey by Public Policy Polling, which found 49 percent opposing the amendment and 43 percent supporting it. A Gallup poll conducted in May found a 50-50 split in the numbers.

The proposed amendment, passed by the Minnesota legislature last year and which will be on the state ballot in November, reads: “Only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota.” Proponents say the amendment is designed to prevent same-sex marriage from being legalized by activist judges, as has happened in Massachusetts and elsewhere.

John Helmberger, chairman of the [Minnesota for Marriage](#) coalition, said that the latest numbers demonstrate “what we’ve always believed: Our opponents have the cultural elite, wealthy contributors, and editorial writers, but we have voters on our side. We are particularly pleased with the lead the amendment enjoys among Independent voters and the large percentage of Democratic voters who support the amendment.”

As reported by *The New American*, at least two major Minnesota corporations have intruded into the marriage issue over the past months. [In June the Target Corporation](#), a major U.S. merchandiser headquartered in the Twin Cities, introduced a line of “gay”-themed t-shirts for sale online, with the proceeds going to the [Family Equality Council](#), a national homosexual group that promotes families headed by homosexual parents, and which [publicly opposes](#) the Minnesota marriage amendment. In announcing the campaign Target spokeswoman Molly Snyder claimed that the company remained neutral on the upcoming marriage amendment vote, while conceding that Target has “a long history of supporting the LGBT community” in a variety of ways.

Randy Sharp of the [American Family Association](#) (AFA) pointed out that in June Target included a [rainbow colored flag on its website](#) to promote homosexual “pride” month. “Really what Target is saying is that ‘we’re going to take sides in this social agenda and we’re not going to support natural marriage,’ ” argued Sharp. “ ‘We’re going to support homosexual marriage.’ ”

Also in June, reported [The New American](#), Minneapolis-based General Mills made a more overt overture



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to the homosexual community, declaring on June 14 that its management does “not believe the proposed constitutional amendment is in the best interests of our employees or our state economy — and as a Minnesota-based company we oppose it.”

In an online letter expanding on the position, Ken Charles, General Mills’ vice president for global diversity and inclusion, explained that while his company “doesn’t normally take positions on ballot measures, this is a business issue that impacts our employees.” He allowed that “there are strongly held views on both sides. We acknowledge those views, including those on religious grounds. We respect and defend the right of others to disagree. But we truly value diversity and inclusion — and that makes our choice clear.”

Emboldened by the actions of Target and General Mills, another major Twin Cities employer, business data and information company Thomson Reuters, came out against the marriage protection amendment, appearing to subtly suggest that its passage might make it difficult for the company to operate effectively in the state. According to the [Minneapolis Star Tribune](#), two officials with Thomson Reuters, which employs some 7,000 people in Minnesota, sent an e-mail to workers saying that they believed “the Minnesota marriage amendment, if passed, would limit our ability to recruit and retain top talent. For this reason, we do not believe that the amendment would be good for Thomson Reuters or the business community in the state.”

[Twin Cities Business](#) magazine reported that the heads of several prominent Twin Cities law firms also insinuated themselves into the debate, signing an open letter expressing their opposition to the marriage protection amendment. “As a number of our state’s corporate leaders have noted, the marriage amendment endangers our business climate, signaling that ours is a community that does not welcome members of the LGBT community,” the letter read. “This directly impacts Minnesota businesses, including law firms, which are dependent on attracting and retaining the best and brightest talent, regardless of sexual orientation.” The attorneys argued that “it is a bad precedent to use the Constitution to deny the civil liberties of a few.”

In response to the letter from the law firms, a group of some 40 attorneys who support the amendment formed under the banner [Lawyers for Marriage](#). Kevin Conneely, the group’s chairman, said the campaign was, in part, a response to the efforts of the high-powered attorneys to use the prestige of their firms to sway the outcome of the November vote — an action he thinks is wrong. “People on both sides of this issue should be able to talk freely about it,” Conneely told [MinnLawyer.com](#), “and we can disagree, but I think as lawyers we have a special role to play to help the public learn about the issue and about how a constitutional amendment works in our state. As a profession, we can’t appear to be partisan. We can be a place where like-minded attorneys can go without trading on their firm name.”

Another member of the pro-marriage attorney group, Teresa Collett, a professor at the University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis, told [MinnLawyer.com](#) that she was surprised by the number of law firms that have taken a public stand for same-sex marriage, and joined Lawyers for Marriage to provide balance in the debate. “I would have assumed that more firms would remain circumspect on political issues,” she said. “There is not unanimity in the legal profession on this issue and it was time for the other point of view to be heard.”

Minnesota for Marriage chairman John Helmberger called the notion that the marriage protection amendment would harm the state’s economy “a complete myth. If anything, the opposite is true.” He said the amendment “simply puts our current definition of marriage beyond the reach of activist judges and politicians to change it without the consent of the voters.”



Photo: The Minnesota State Capitol building in St. Paul.



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