



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 11, 2012

## Pro-Family Groups Block Same-Sex Marriage in Washington State

Washington State's high-profile same-sex marriage law, aggressively pursued and signed into law by Governor Christine Gregoire in February, has been blocked from going into effect after proponents of traditional marriage delivered more than 200,000 petition signatures demanding that state voters be allowed to make the final decision on the definition of marriage. The [Seattle Times](#) reported that [Preserve Marriage Washington](#), the group leading the campaign, submitted more than 241,000 signatures to the Secretary of State's office June 6, double the 120,577 needed to put the issue before voters in November.



As reported by [The New American](#), in early February both the state's House of Representatives and Senate passed the "marriage equality" bill, which was quickly signed by Gregoire, making Washington the seventh state to re-define homosexual partnerships as "marriage." Gregoire said that with passage of the bill "we tell the nation that Washington state will no longer deny our citizens the opportunity to marry the person they love."

But those revering traditional marriage had another idea. "The current definition of marriage works and has worked," Preserve Marriage Washington's chairman, Joseph Blackholm, told reporters as he stood next to stacked boxes of the petitions that will force a referendum in November.

Blackholm said that both churches and individuals at the grassroots level played an important role in garnering the needed signatures to put the issue on the ballot. "We had more than 1,500 churches and more than 5,000 individuals involved in the signature collection effort," he told the [Christian Post](#). He warned, however, that the campaign to overturn the gay "marriage" law will be a tough one. "We know that those trying to redefine marriage are highly motivated, well organized, and well-funded," he told the *Post*. "We expect to have to work very hard and will need the involvement of every common-sense conservative in Washington State."

But, he added, the defenders of traditional marriage had plenty of momentum, noting that the nearly quarter of a million signatures garnered in the petition drive is "a good indicator of a tremendous amount of support in Washington for marriage." He predicted that with the November referendum "Washington will join the other 32 states who have voted on this issue and conclude that marriage is a union between a man and a woman."

One of the issues hampering the pro-marriage effort is the fact that the law legalizing same-sex marriage has already been passed. The *Seattle Times* noted that the ballot initiative, Referendum 74, will essentially call for an affirmation of the same-sex marriage law, requiring opponents to garner the needed voters to overturn the measure. "Approval of Ref. 74 would allow gays to legally wed in



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Washington,” the *Times* explained, adding that “while rejection would repeal the law, Peter Nicolas, law professor at the University of Washington, said there’s nothing preventing the legislature from attempting to pass another bill.”

Zach Silk, campaign manager for the pro-homosexual Washington United for Marriage, said that as the battle heats up his groups would be spending “a lot of time having conversations in every corner of the state about how important it is that loving couples have the freedom to marry.”

By contrast, Blackholm said efforts by pro-family groups to defend traditional marriage would focus on emphasizing to Washington voters “what marriage means, why it matters, how we see parenthood and family and our society structured over the next three or four generations, and the implications for education and religious freedom if we make marriage genderless.”

Blackholm told the *Seattle Times* that homosexual activists have been successful in persuading people that by “supporting the redefinition of marriage you prove you are a kind, decent person. A big part of our job will be to convince people who know better that you can be a good and decent person without supporting a change in the definition of marriage.”

The *Times* reported that champions of traditional marriage got a huge boost in their petition effort from Washington’s Muslim community, which has been relatively quiet thus far on the issue of same-sex marriage. During the petition drive several Seattle area mosques requested thousands of the petitions to circulate among members, “and through November Muslims plan to campaign alongside religious conservatives seeking to overturn the law,” reported the *Times*.

“It’s pretty clear from an Islamic perspective we have to support this issue because Islamic marriage is between a man and a woman,” said Aziz Junejo, a frequent speaker on Islamic issues in the Seattle area. Blackholm added that while “Christians and the Muslims have not always worked that well together, [h]ere is a place of commonality. We are building bridges.”

Brian Brown of the [National Organization for Marriage](#) (NOM), which has led the fight for traditional marriage across the nation, said that the petition drive in Washington State “produced more signatures than have ever been collected by any referendum committee in the history of the state. This shows the broad and deep support that traditional marriage enjoys, and sets the stage for a tremendous victory for marriage this November.”

But the *New York Times* suggested that the pro-marriage forces would have a tough time overturning the law in a state that has traditionally tilted left on social issues. In addition to passing the same-sex marriage law, Washington is “the only state where voters have confirmed domestic partnership rights for gay couples, ratifying in 2009 a law passed by the legislature,” the *Times* noted.

Add to that a recent [telephone poll by Strategies 360](#) indicating that 54 percent of Washington voters think same-sex marriage should be legalized, and the fact that President Obama, who enjoys a 54 percent approval rating in the state, has heartily endorsed the homosexual lifestyle, and it is apparent that Preserve Marriage Washington and its allies have their work cut out for them to turn the tide for traditional marriage in time for the November ballot.

Nonetheless, NOM’s Brian Brown predicted that Washington voters would follow the trend of a majority of other states. “Thirty-two states in America have voted on marriage and every one has stood for traditional marriage, and rejected redefining marriage,” he said. “We have no doubt that Washington State will do the same.”



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*Photo: Officials at the Secretary of State's office sort petitions for Referendum 74 , which will provide a public vote on gay marriage, June 6, 2012, in Olympia, Wash.: AP Images*



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