



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on October 29, 2009

## Same-sex Marriage on Ballot in Maine

"As Maine goes, so goes the nation," was a popular saying in the days when Maine voted before the rest of the nation and the choice was usually Republican or Democrat. But when Maine voters go the polls next Tuesday, they will decide whether the state's definition of marriage will be a union of man and woman or person to person. The Downeast voters face a referendum to determine whether the law establishing same-sex marriage, passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor last spring, will remain the law or be consigned to the dustbin of legislative history.



"Unless we act now, marriage will be redefined in Maine," Brian Brown, executive director of the conservative National Organization for Marriage, recently wrote his members. The New Jersey-based organization apparently views Maine as something of a bellwether. "If we lose marriage in Maine, we risk losing marriage everywhere," Brown wrote. The chairman of Stand for Marriage Maine, the group leading the repeal effort, agrees that the Maine vote will have a loud national echo.

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It's a defining moment," Marc Mutty told Newsmax.com. "What happens here in Maine is going to have a mushrooming effect on the issue at large."

Only 45 days after Governor John Baldacci signed the "gay" marriage bill in May, Stand for Marriage Maine submitted a petition with 100,000 signatures calling for its repeal. That was more than enough to put the issue on the ballot as a "People's Veto Question." People have the opportunity to vote either "Yes" or "No" on Question 1: "Do you want to reject the new law that lets same-sex couples marry and allows individuals and religious groups to refuse to perform these marriages?"

National Organization for Marriage and Stand for Marriage Maine are urging a "Yes" vote. Protecting Equality in Maine and Maine Freedom to Marry are calling on voters to say "No." The League of Women Voters of Maine, supporting "equality in marriage," is recommending a "No" vote. Both sides see the referendum as an opportunity for proponents of same-sex marriage laws to stage a comeback after last year's passage in California of Proposition 8, which defined marriage solely as a union between a man and woman in the nation's largest state. Maine's population is but a tiny fraction of California's and the battle over marriage in the northeast corner of New England has not attracted the level of months-long media attention that the contest in California drew.

Still, as the *New York Times* reported this week, the Maine referendum comes at "a crucial point in the same-sex marriage movement. Still reeling from last year's defeat in California, gay-rights advocates say a defeat here could further a perception that only judges and politicians embrace same-sex marriage."

It may be more than a perception. While marriage laws in Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, and



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Vermont have, like Maine's, been amended to allow same-sex couples to legally wed, courts and legislatures, not voters, made that change. As the *Times* noted, same-sex marriage issue has been the subject of referenda in "about 30 states" and in every one the vote has gone in favor of maintaining the traditional definition of marriage. For that reason alone, a different outcome in Maine would be significant. And in a contest where polls show the populace evenly divided, activists on both sides are stressing the importance of Tuesday's vote.

"If they can win in Maine, it would be historic," Marc Mutty, chairman of the Stand for Marriage Maine campaign, warned in a recent fund-raising letter. "They will use a victory to attempt to convince the media that the mood of the nation has changed and that it is time for America to also abandon the God-created idea of marriage."

The Roman Catholic Church is among the religious organizations that oppose same-sex marriage, and the Catholic Church in Maine is seen as an ally of activists urging repeal. But Catholic voters, like the state as a whole, appear divided on the issue. Indeed, Gov. Baldacci, who signed the same-sex marriage law and is actively campaigning against its repeal, is a Roman Catholic.

Mormon voters, who played a key role in mobilizing support for Proposition 8 in California, are far less numerous in Maine. Some Mormons from out of state have come to Maine to work as volunteers in the Question 1 campaign, while homosexual and lesbian activists have come to the state to campaign for the "No" vote. Those working to save the same-sex marriage law have more foot soldiers in the state than the defenders of traditional marriage, the *Times* reported, and the traditionalists are on the short end of the money battle as well. Stand for Marriage Maine has reportedly raised \$2.6 million, compared to \$4 million for Protect Maine Equality. Both sides have been running TV ads, with proponents of repeal stressing issues of sexual morality. One ad warns that in Massachusetts, where same-sex marriage has been legal by order of the state's Supreme Court since 2003, some teachers answer "thoroughly and explicitly" when students ask about gay sex. Opponents of repeal make their argument on the basis of personal freedom and equal rights.

"You may disagree," a gray-haired lobsterman says in a Protect Maine Equality ad, "but people have a right to live the way they want to live." Gov. Baldacci stressed the equality issue when he addressed a pro-gay marriage rally in Bangor on Wednesday. "I think Maine people have recognized ... that we are all unique people, we are all different," Baldacci said, according to the *Bangor Daily News*. "But we are all under the same Constitution and we all want to make sure there is equal protection for all citizens."

Along with the significantly smaller Mormon population, Maine also has a far smaller percentage of African-American and Latino voters than California, two groups more opposed to same-sex marriage than the population at large. Black voters turned out in higher than usual numbers in California as in other states last year with Barack Obama at the top of the Democratic ticket. On the other hand, many of those in favor of retaining the same-sex marriage law are college and college-age students who tend to vote in smaller numbers than older voters who are more apt to favor repeal. With the race seen now as neck and neck, both sides are working hard and anxiously awaiting the outcome, both within and beyond the state of Maine. Richard D. Land, the president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, told Newsmax he is confident of repeal.

"We're going to win in Maine," he said. "The pro marriage forces are being outspent considerably, maybe as much as 2-to-1. But the poll numbers look close, and we've outperformed our poll numbers in all of these elections ... every single one." But the battle Tuesday night and Wednesday morning will be not only about which side has won, but how it is "spun"



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"Now, one thing I do know," Land said. "If the other side wins in Maine, the *New York Times* will make much more of it than it really deserves. And if they lose, they'll make much less of it than it really deserves. That you can take for granted."



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