



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 9, 2012

Washington State Governor Puts “Gay” Marriage on Fast Track

As she heads into the last year of her tenure in the state of Washington, Democratic Governor Christine Gregoire (left) has a handful of policy initiatives she would like to push through to pad her political legacy: balance the state’s budget, raise state revenues, create some jobs to help the economy, improve education. And force through a bill legalizing homosexual marriage.



After seven years of waffling and “vague answers” on the issue, the Roman Catholic Governor, whose stand on homosexual marriage is at odds with her church’s teaching, announced on January 4 that “she not only supports allowing gays and lesbians to marry, but will propose legislation to legalize it in Washington state,” reported the [Seattle Times](#).

“Our gay and lesbian families face the same hurdles as heterosexual families — making ends meet, choosing what school to send their kids to, finding someone to grow old with, standing in front of friends and family and making a lifetime commitment,” Gregoire said in announcing her decision to support legalizing homosexual marriage. “For all couples, a state marriage license is very important. It gives them the right to enter into a marriage contract in which their legal interests, and those of their children if any, are protected by well-established civil law.”

While Gregoire has supported giving homosexual partners the same rights as traditional married couples, “she had never before endorsed same-sex marriage publicly,” reported the *Times*. “In past interviews she’s never directly said whether she personally supports it or would sign a bill approving gay marriage.”

In fact, during her first run for Governor in 2004, Gregoire said that she did not “believe that Washington state is ready to support gay marriage.” Four years later, she insisted that the “state’s responsibility is to absolutely ensure equality,” but called marriage a “religious issue” and said that she would “leave it to the churches” to determine its parameters.

Proponents of traditional marriage pointed out that Gregoire’s change of heart on “gay” marriage — and her decision to push for its legalization — has come conveniently at the end of her term, when she does not have to answer to an electorate. But with heartfelt emotion the Governor recalled a “journey” that gave her the gumption to call for the controversial measure.

“It’s right here that frees me up to do this,” she told reporters as she pointed to her heart. “I have not liked where I’ve been for seven years. I have sorted it out in my head and in my heart.”



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Gregoire explained that the main obstacle to conceding legalized marriage to homosexuals was her Christian faith, but she was somehow finally able to justify the change in her own mind. "It has been a battle for me with my religion," she admitted. "I have always been uncomfortable with the position that I have taken publicly. And then I came to realize the religions can decide what they want to do, but it is not okay for the state to discriminate."

Of course, it hasn't hurt that constant bombardment by activists on the issue has worn down the resistance of Washington State residents to homosexual marriage. According to the [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#), the [Washington Poll](#) which has tracked the issue over the past five years has shown a shift in the state toward tolerance of homosexual marriage. "In 2006, just 30 percent of those surveyed favored same-sex marriage," noted the newspaper. "The figure was up to 43 percent last fall, with another two percent saying same-sex couples deserve 'the same legal rights' but it shouldn't be called marriage."

According to the poll, a majority of Washington voters said they would back a legislative vote legalizing same-sex marriage. In 2009 voters passed Ref. 71, which affirmed "the current 'everything but marriage' set of legal rights set down by the Legislature," reported the *Post-Intelligencer*.

Following her decision to push for homosexual marriage — which she said came after conferring with friends, colleagues, and family — Gregoire followed up by approaching Archbishop Peter Sartain of the Seattle diocese — but apparently only to inform him of her change in direction. "I have talked to the Archbishop," Gregoire told local PBS station KCTS. "I talked to him the day before the announcement." She described the conversation as "very good, very respectful, and very appropriate."

While it has taken Gregoire several years to come out on the issue, homosexual activists said it was better late than never. "We have to celebrate when people's positions evolve on marriage equality," said Josh Friedes of [Equal Rights Washington](#). "Her journey was very much like so many other people's journey, but she's taken it publicly. I think this is going to help other people move in the direction of support for marriage equality."

The [Seattle Times'](#) editors also applauded Gregoire's announcement, challenging state legislators to follow suit and "ensure that gay and lesbian couples have the same rights and recognition of their loving relationships and families as everyone else."

Calling their state a "live-and-let-live kind of place," the *Times'* op-edsters wrote that Washington "should be a leader in pressing for change. Our state should join New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Iowa, and the District of Columbia in treating same-sex couples equitably."

But Joseph Backholm, executive director of Washington State's [Family Policy Institute](#), criticized Gregoire's move, telling Bloomberg News: "Marriage has never existed for the purpose of affirming relationships involving adults. The primary function of marriage is to create the greatest likelihood that children will be raised by their mother and father."

The Spokane [Spokesman-Review](#) reported that religious and pro-family groups have already begun organizing for the fight to defend traditional marriage in the state. Among the leaders is the Rev. Ken Hutcherson of Kirkland, Washington's Antioch Baptist Church, who said pro-family forces would "'absolutely' fight the bill during the upcoming session," reported the *Spokesman-Review*. "We're looking extremely forward to it," Hutcherson told the paper, adding, "We do not want to give the Democrats or the Republicans the opportunity to put it on the people."



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Republican State Senator Dan Swecker, one of the leading legislative opponents to a homosexual marriage bill, criticized Gregoire for introducing such a distracting issue while lawmakers are facing a short session during which they must make steep budget cuts. "It will be a very divisive issue," he said. "She's just kind of fanning the flames."

Brian Brown, president of the [National Organization for Marriage](#), a pro-family group committed to defending traditional marriage, told [Reuters News](#) that his group would lend its assistance to stop the effort. "The people of this country believe that marriage is a union of a man and a woman," Brown said. "I expect the legislature in Washington state will stand up for this commitment and vote to protect marriage."



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