



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 16, 2011

GOP Heavy Hitters Now Batting for “Gay” Marriage

The push to establish same-sex marriage in the state of New York is being backed, financially and otherwise, the New York Times reported Friday, by “an unexpected source: a group of conservative financiers and wealthy donors to the Republican Party, most of whom are known for bankrolling right-leaning candidates and causes.” Their donations totaling about \$1 million, delivered in recent weeks to a coalition of “gay rights” organizations “could alter the political calculus of Albany lawmakers,” theTimes noted, “especially Republican state senators in whose hands the fate of gay marriage rests.”



The donors named by the *Times* include hedge-fund manager Paul E. Singer, a “top-tier Republican donor,” and financiers Steven A. Cohen and Clifford S. Asness. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg (pictured above), a billionaire businessman and philanthropist, plans a fundraiser for the cause at his Upper East Side town house and will be giving \$100,000 of his own money, as well as lobbying lawmakers at the state capital and giving a speech on the issue. The contributions from the traditionally Republican donors total about two-thirds of the same-sex marriage coalition’s fund raising, *Times* reported, “making New York the rare state where a lobbying campaign in favor of legalizing gay unions is not being financed primarily by liberal donors and Democrats.” Ken Mehlman, a former chairman of the Republican National Committee who has since announced he is “gay,” is himself a contributor to the coalition and has recruited other donors, the *Times* reported.

The money will be used to fund a combination of heavy TV advertising and a grassroots campaign to persuade the Republican majority in the state Senate to support same-sex marriage legislation. The Democratically controlled lower house, called the State Assembly has passed numerous same-sex marriage bills only to see them die in the Senate. The Senate last defeated the effort in 2009.

As the *Times* noted, the Republican donors see the legalization of same-sex marriage as consistent with the GOP message of limited government and personal freedom. “I’m a pretty straight-down-the-line small-government guy,” Asness, a self-described libertarian, told the New York paper. “This is an issue of basic freedom,” he said.

“We believe in social justice for all Americans,” said Cohen, who runs SAC Capital Advisers and is a frequent fundraiser for Republicans. Some also see it as a means of broadening the party’s appeal and expanding the coalitions of voters covered by what some like to call the party’s inclusive “big tent.”

“I think it is important in particular for Republicans to know this is a bipartisan issue,” said Daniel Loeb, who, the *Times* reported, has donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the cause. “If they’re Republican, they will not be abandoned by the party for supporting this. On the contrary, I think they will find that there is a whole new world of people who will support them on an ongoing basis if they support this cause.”



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But the issue will almost certainly continue to be a source of contention throughout the Grand Old Party, in New York as well as elsewhere in the country. In the 2009 special election to fill a vacancy in the state's 23rd congressional district, Republicans in the conservative upstate district deserted in droves candidate Deirdre Scozzafava, nominated by the party's state committee. Scozzafava's social agenda included a defense of abortion "rights" and support for same-sex marriage, positions that drove much of the Republican base to Doug Hoffman, the candidate of the Conservative Party of New York. Republican leaders nationally were divided over the contest, with some, including Tea Party favorite Sarah Palin, endorsing Hoffman, while former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and the Republican National Committee urged support for the Republican nominee. Invoking party loyalty in support of Scozzafava proved embarrassingly futile, however, when the candidate, running a distant third in the polls, dropped out of the race on the weekend before the election and endorsed Democrat Bill Owens, who defeated Hoffman in a close race.

In that same year, the New York Senate, by a vote of 34 to 28 defeated a same-sex marriage bill after proponents had spent a year of intense lobbying for the bill and \$1 million in legislative races to elect candidates in favor of it.

Supporters are hoping for a favorable vote in the current session. On Sunday, supporters and opponents of same-sex marriage held competing rallies in Manhattan and the Bronx.



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