



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on March 11, 2024

Ignoring Government Blarney, Irish Voters Resoundingly Defeat Anti-family Referenda

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar [admitted](#) Saturday that his government had taken “two wallops” from voters as a pair of referenda that would have watered down provisions of the Irish constitution supporting mothers and marriage were overwhelmingly defeated.

Forty-four percent of Irish voters turned out Friday to reject the two referenda, with those opposed clearly more motivated than those in favor.

The referenda would have amended Article 41 of the Irish constitution, which acknowledges the family’s “inalienable and imprescriptible rights,” a mother’s unique contribution to society, and the value of marriage.



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The proposed 39th Amendment would have altered section 1, subsection 1°, which declares, “The State recognizes the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society,” to read, “The State recognizes the Family, *whether founded on marriage or on other durable relationships*, as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society.” (Emphasis added.) It would also have stricken the clause “on which the Family is founded” from section 3, subsection 1°, which commands the government “to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack.”

The proposed 40th Amendment would have replaced section 2:

1° In particular, the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.

2° The State shall, therefore, endeavor to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labor to the neglect of their duties in the home.

with

The State recognizes that the provision of care, by members of a family to one another by reason of the bonds that exist among them, gives to Society a support without which the common good cannot be achieved, and shall strive to support such provision.

The 39th Amendment was rejected by 68 percent of voters. Meanwhile, 74 percent — “the highest percentage of ‘no’ votes of any referendum [ever] held in Ireland,” according to [LifeSiteNews](#) — shot



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down the 40th Amendment, seemingly the less controversial of the two in light of the changes in women's roles since the constitution was adopted in 1937. Perhaps the fact that Sunday was Ireland's Mother's Day had something to do with it.

Considering that the Irish government, practically every opposition party, and left-wing state-funded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were all vocal supporters of both referenda, "the scale of rejection spelled humiliation" for all of them, observed the [Guardian](#).

Before the vote, Varadkar tried to paint referenda opponents as Neanderthals "who want to slow or stall our progress as a society."

Conservatives, however, refused to be cowed. Irish journalist [John Waters](#), for example, wrote that the government was "using the same old 'progressive' bait to lead people to perdition." He contended that the 40th Amendment was aimed at removing "the words 'woman' and 'mother' because they plan to speak in [the] future not about mothers and [fathers] but about 'Parent 1' and 'Parent 2.'" The 39th Amendment, he argued, "is mainly about creating a vague redefinition of 'Family' so they can bring in more and more migrants ... including Muslim families who practice polygamy and are therefore 'discriminated against' under existing Irish law."

The government did little to allay such concerns. [Politico](#) noted that "the government struggled to define what 'other durable relationships' might mean in legal disputes, fanning conservatives' fears ... that inheritance rights might become a broadening battleground involving estranged wives, live-in girlfriends and other relations." On top of that, Attorney General Rossa Fanning's advice that "it is difficult to predict with certainty how the Irish courts would interpret the concept of 'other durable relationships'" was leaked to the press the day before the vote, reported the [Irish Times](#).

The verbiage also caused consternation among leftists, who wanted stronger anti-homemaker language and considered the state's commitment merely to "strive to support" family caregivers "a cheapskate cop-out," as Politico put it.

"There seemed to be little interest in the government to listening to concerns on the wording, and maybe a little arrogance in believing that voters would get carried away on a wave of feminism on International Women's Day and simply pass these two referendums," Laura Cahillane, an associate professor at the University of Limerick School of Law, told Politico.

Making matters worse was the manner in which the referenda were introduced. The government hurriedly pushed them through Parliament in December, allowing next to no debate. Voters were naturally suspicious of the motives behind such moves.

"The arrogance, secrecy, insider-ism, and sometimes duplicity, that characterized the selling of the ... referendums," [Irish Senator Rónán Mullen](#) remarked on X, "has got the response it deserved."

"The Government must stop playing ideological games," he demanded. "Today's resounding reaffirmation of family life, marriage and the role of mothers, and the rejection of NGO-sponsored groupthink means the Government should press the pause button on its culture war policies."

It may press "pause," but it seems unlikely to hit "stop," let alone "rewind." According to the [Guardian](#), "Eamon Ryan, the Green party leader and transport minister, said there would be no attempt at another referendum *before the next election*." (Emphasis added.)

But, he said, "The next government will have to come back to this and consider the campaign and what were the arguments that merited a 'no' vote in both cases." Then, presumably, it can try to bamboozle



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Irish voters into passing “improved” versions.



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