

## **No surprise: House defeats marriage amendment**

Thursday 20 July 2006

The House of Representatives again failed to pass an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would ban gay marriage. The July 18 vote was 236-187 in favor of the amendment, but that was 47 votes short of the two-thirds majority required to pass a constitutional amendment.

Antigay supporters of the amendment picked up nine more votes than the last time the House considered the measure, in September 2004, while opponents gained a single vote. Most of those votes came from members who had ducked the issue earlier, though Republicans did gain four seats in the last election.

The three openly gay members of Congress played a leading role in the floor debate preceding the vote.

"I do not understand what motivates you; I don't tell you who to love," Representatives Barney Frank (D-Massachusetts) told the Rules Committee the previous day. He said the states are capable of determining whether or not they wish to offer the option of marriage to same-sex couples, as Massachusetts has done. This amendment would preclude that.

Representative Tammy Baldwin (D-Wisconsin) called the amendment "hateful and unnecessary - unworthy of our great Constitution." She said it was being brought to a vote "for the purpose of pandering to a narrow political base."

Representative Jim Kolbe (R-Arizona) said, "This Congress and those after it should be about protecting and expanding freedom. This proposed amendment to our constitution is about discrimination. It is about fear. It is unnecessary. It is unwarranted and it should be soundly defeated."

Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, who represents San Francisco, took to the floor with an impassioned speech that used the example of lesbian icons "Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, both in their 80s, who have lived together for more than 50 years - Should they not have the full protection of the law?" Pelosi said.

The vote was largely along partisan lines with 202 Republicans supporting it and only 27 voting no. The same number of Republicans voted no two years ago.

Democrats voted 34-159 against the amendment. That was a decline in support of two conservative Democrats who had lost their bids for re-election.

"Republican House leaders have now failed twice in their shameful election-year ploys using gay and lesbian families as punching bags," said Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Executive Director Matt Foreman said, "Once again, a bipartisan bloc has soundly rejected this immoral constitutional amendment that sought to dehumanize lesbian and gay Americans and their families. - There is no traction in this issue."

Log Cabin Republicans President Patrick Guerriero said, "The House spoke very clearly and again said that marriage is an issue the states are perfectly capable of handling."

07/20/2006