

## **Lobbying Intense As House Takes Up Anti-Gay Amendment**

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By 365 gay.com staff

**(Washington)** The House will vote Tuesday on a proposed amendment to the Constitution that would ban same-sex marriage - part of what the Republican leadership calls "American values agenda" week.

Phone lines to congressional offices were lighting up Monday with people on both sides of the issue lobbying members of both parties.

"The radical right is campaigning vigorously in support of this amendment," the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force told its members in a Monday morning mass emailing. "It is time to make your voice heard! Tell your representative to vote against the Federal Marriage Amendment because you do not believe that discrimination belongs in our Constitution."

The American Family Association and other conservative groups were just as busy rallying their supporters.

Republicans know the proposed amendment has little chance of passing. It already has failed to win endorsement in the Senate.

But they know the issue is popular with its conservative base - something the GOP needs to energize as its heads into this year's mid term election.

A similar attempt to pass the amendment in 2004, just before the election, also failed to win enough support to advance.

Human Rights Campaign president Joe Solmonese calls the vote an act of desperation by a party in deep trouble.

"It's a move to appease a rapidly dwindling base," he said.

Rep. Tammy Baldwin, the openly lesbian Democrat from Wisconsin, agreed.

Baldwin said the proposed amendment "certainly is a tool that the right wing is using, but I think it has lost the impact it had in 2004."

The amendment, written by Rep. Marilyn Musgrave (R-Colo.) and co-sponsored by several dozen other Republicans reads: "Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution, nor the constitution of any state, shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman."

The second sentence would negate civil unions and could be used to thwart domestic partnerships and benefits.

Another version of the amendment was introduced last week by Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-Texas). It reads: "Marriage in the United States shall consist only of a legal union of one man and one woman."

It is not yet clear if that version will be allowed to come to a vote.

Because it is limited solely to marriage and would not affect other, although less effective means of recognizing same-sex relationships Gohmert believes it could attract moderate Republicans.