

THE CHRISTIAN POST

Some State Campaigns on Gay 'Marriage'

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In addition to Wisconsin, three other states — Arizona, Colorado and Virginia — are viewed by gay-rights strategists as having closely contested campaigns this fall over proposed constitutional amendments that would ban gay marriage and civil unions. A brief look at the campaigns:

ARIZONA:

If this election is close, it will be because of a section of the proposed amendment which would bar local governments and state-run schools from recognizing any relationship similar to marriage, such as civil unions or domestic partnerships.

Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon, among others, has criticized the measure, saying a ban on domestic partnerships could hurt the city's ability to recruit skilled employees.

Bruce Merrill, a pollster and political scientist at Arizona State University, says roughly two-thirds of Arizonans favor limiting marriage to one man, one woman, while an almost equally large majority support domestic partnerships.

He suggested some Arizonans oppose the amendment simply because they view it as government intrusion into private matters.

"If there's a frontier mentality left, it's in Mountain States," he said. "There's an attitude of, 'Leave us alone.'"

COLORADO:

This campaign is unprecedented because, in addition to the ban-gay-marriage ban, there is a separate measure put on the ballot by gay-rights supporters that would establish the legality of domestic partnerships providing same-sex couples with many of the rights of married couples.

Both measures could be approved, both could lose, or one could prevail but not the other.

The showdown has drawn some large contributions — \$500,000 for the marriage ban from the political arm of the Colorado Springs-based Christian ministry Focus on the Family, and an even larger sum for the domestic-partnership measure from a foundation overseen by software millionaire Tim Gill, a major backer of gay-rights causes.

VIRGINIA:

Recent polls show Virginia's ban likely to win approval, but opponents have mounted a strong campaign, raising more than twice as much money through August as the ban supporters.

Opponents of the measure include Democratic Gov. Timothy Kaine, who says some of its provisions might impede legislators if they wanted to extend legal recognition to unmarried couples in the future.

Dave Fleischer, a political organizer for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, commended the activists running anti-amendment campaigns in all these states, but said they remain underdogs.

"Whether we have a chance or not, once it's on the ballot, we don't have a choice but to give it everything we've got," he said. "If we don't fight these, the message we send is that we're a safe group for fundamentalists and right-wing bigots to attack — it's like wearing a sign that says, 'Kick me.'"