



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 27, 2012

Maryland Latest State to Legalize Same-Sex Marriage

Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley (left) said he will move quickly to sign into law the homosexual "marriage" bill to which the state legislature gave its final approval on February 23. The state Senate's 25-22 vote passage came less than a week after Maryland's House of Delegates gave the bill a razor-thin approval.



With O'Malley's signature, Maryland will become the eighth state to legally raise homosexual relationships to the stature of marriage, following Washington State, which [passed a similar measure](#) in early February. "This issue has taken a lot of energy, as well it should," said a beaming O'Malley following passage, "and I'm very proud of the House of Delegates and also the Senate for resolving this issue on the side of human dignity, and I look forward to signing the bill."

The *Baltimore Sun* recalled that efforts to legalize same-sex marriage in the state fell short last year after the bill died in the House of Delegates without coming to a vote. "In July 2011, O'Malley, a Democrat, announced he would include a gay marriage law in his legislative package that would allow religious organizations to refuse to conduct same-sex weddings," the paper reported.

Pro-family groups said that insufficient conscience protection for churches and ministers was just one of the problems in the bill, and they promised to immediately begin work to place the issue before voters in a November referendum. They will need to collect nearly 56,000 valid signatures, an effort they will begin in earnest once O'Malley signs the measure into law.

Delegate Neil Parrott said he had filed draft language for a referendum petition with the state board of elections the day after the bill passed the Senate. "The process is started and really the goal is to make sure the citizens of Maryland can vote on this very important bill," Parrott told the [Washington Post](#).

Homosexual activists made it clear that they feared the prospect of leaving the definition of marriage to the will of the people. "It's sad to me that anyone would think that it's OK to put up the rights of a minority to a popular vote," said Lisa Polyak of the homosexual activist group Equality Maryland. "We have children, we have lives, we have jobs, and we just want to go about them with integrity."

Kathy Dempsey of the [Maryland Catholic Conference](#), one of the groups working to defend traditional marriage, said that the people of her state were eager to have their say on the issue. "The enormous public outcry that this legislation has generated — voiced by Marylanders that span political, racial, social, and religious backgrounds — demonstrates a clear need to take this issue to a vote of the people," she said. "Every time this issue has been brought to a statewide vote, the people have upheld



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traditional marriage. When this issue reaches the November ballot, we are confident that the citizens of Maryland will join voters in 31 other states in upholding marriage between one man and one woman.”

Homosexual activists said that they would galvanize their forces to fight for the political ground they have gained. “There remains a lot of work to do between now and November to make marriage equality a reality in Maryland,” said Joe Solmonese of the pro-homosexual Human Rights Campaign. “Along with coalition partners, we look forward to educating and engaging voters about what this bill does: It strengthens all Maryland families and protects religious liberty.” Kathy Dempsey argued, however, that the religious freedoms the measure supposedly guarantees for individuals opposed to homosexual relationships are “ambiguous and limited.”

She also addressed the impact of the bill on children, noting that “stripping marriage of its unique connection to parenthood erases from civil law the right of a child to a mother and father, and ignores an essential question of why government favors marriage between one man and one woman over all other relationships.”

Dempsey pointed out that the unique rights of children were “consistently ignored by proponents of the bill to redefine marriage, in favor of the claim that we must redefine marriage in order to provide legal protections to any two people who love each other.” She said that “there are many ways to provide such protections — redefining marriage is not one of them.

Following final passage of the bill, pastors and religious leaders promised that they would take their place in the battle to defend traditional marriage in Maryland. “We will do whatever we can to mobilize for the referendum,” Robert Anderson, pastor of Colonial Baptist Church in Randallstown, told [Baptist Press News](#). He said that while the same-sex marriage side may have the money and political clout, God was on the side of traditional marriage, and “with God, all things are possible.”

[Baltimore Cardinal Edwin F. O’Brien](#) released a statement saying that his archdiocese would “eagerly and zealously engage its 500,000 members in overturning this radical legislation, and will join with the hundreds of thousands of others in this Archdiocese and throughout Maryland in aggressively protecting the God-given institution of marriage.”

In related news, voters in Minnesota and North Carolina will be voting on referendums in November that would define marriage in those states as only between a man and a woman. Meanwhile, according to the group [National Organization for Marriage](#), lawmakers in New Hampshire are considering a repeal of that state’s homosexual marriage law. Additionally, the group said, lawsuits that would expand civil unions or overturn laws that favor traditional marriage are being considered in the courts of at least 12 states, including Hawaii, Minnesota, and California.

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