

The Minnesota Marriage Amendment

By Corey Ledin

The state of Minnesota has been a hot spot for political issues in 2012. An upcoming ballot on Nov. 6 will give Minnesotans the choice to vote on the definition of marriage.

This year's election is monumental, not just because it is a Presidential election, but also because voters will decide on two constitutional amendments—the Minnesota Voter Identification Amendment and the Minnesota Marriage Amendment. The latter of the two has drawn attention locally and nationally, sparking two major campaigns: Minnesotans for Marriage, aiming to define marriage between one man and one

“If the amendment passes it would make it next to impossible for gay marriage to become legalized in the future.”

woman; and Minnesotans United for All Families, an organization hoping to give all people—gays, lesbians, and straights alike—the right to marry.

Currently, Minnesota does not allow gay and lesbian couples to marry. If the amendment passes it would make it next to impossible for gay marriage to become legalized in the future. The amendment

would make the constitutional definition of marriage to be allocated to heterosexual couples exclusively.

According to the Minnesotans for Marriage website, “If activist judges or politicians were to succeed in redefining marriage in Minnesota in the future, there would be profound consequences for religious organizations, individuals, and small businesses—and for society itself.” The website goes on to say that “Marriage will be redefined for everyone.”

On the opposing side, Minnesotans United for All Families webpage states, “We are a coalition founded on a strong belief in the power of marriage. We believe marriage and family are about love and commitment, working together, bettering the community, raising children, and growing old together.”

According to polls, the election is essentially a teeter-totter, with equal distribution on either end—the election could swing both ways. Issues with potentially problematic language on the ballot have ensued, causing confusion among voters. “Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to provide that only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as marriage in Minnesota?”—Minnesota State Legislator, May 2011.

To clarify:

A vote Yes, for the amendment, would make a change in the constitution. This would only make marriage possible to heterosexual couples. Voting No would be in agreement of marriage to both gay and straight couples; however, it would not change anything in the law, but pave the path to marriage equality in the future. Voting takes place on Nov. 6, 2012.

Voter ID Law: Constitutional or Not?

By Arielle Stimson

The Voter Identification (ID) Amendment proposal has become a huge political topic for the potential sway of the race. If you haven't done much research on the topic, the Voter ID amendment would make it necessary for voters to show a photo ID to be able to vote. Some people believe that the Voter ID Amendment could be highly effective in preventing voter fraud. On the other hand, critics see it as a way to prevent different groups from being able to vote. Currently, the law varies drastically from state to state. Some states allow you to show a utility bill or bank statement, while others require voters to show a government-issued photo ID. The Republican Party has been the primary party for proposing this Voter ID amendment.

Here in Minnesota, Democratic governors have vetoed strict photo ID bills passed by the Republican led legislature last year. If this law is passed it could drastically impact the amount of voters and their eligibility in the election. According to the New York University (NYU) Brennan Center for Justice, about 11 percent of U.S. citizens, or roughly 21 million citizens, don't have government-issued photo ID. States that already have the Voter ID law in practice use the provisional ballot for voters who are unable to provide a government issued photo ID at the time.



This ballot is a temporary paper form that has their voter information recorded but not counted unless the voter can provide a photo ID document within a set amount of time.

Some people see this law as an act of discrimination under the Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. States like Texas and South Carolina have implemented strict Voter ID laws that have since been revoked because of the effect the law would have on minority voters. Many minorities in those states were upset because of the lack of availability to get government issued identification. In many states, there are limited Department of Motor Vehicles and other Government issued ID resources within a reasonable mile radius from where citizens live. This can also be a problem for citizens without means of transportation or extra funds to travel.

According to the NYU Brennan Center for justice, “The percentage of citizens who don't have government-issued photo ID's is even higher for seniors, people of color, people with disabilities, low-income voters, and students.” On the Nov. 6, 2012 ballot the question will be “Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to require all voters to present valid photo identification to vote and to require the state to provide free identification to eligible voters, effective July 1, 2013?” Yes or No, you decide.