



Anti-Gay Group Quits Push to Rewrite Illinois Marriage Law

By GayWebMonkey.com

Chicago, IL - Proponents for an anti-gay marriage advisory referendum on Illinois' statewide ballot this November say the fight is officially over.

"This is the end of the road for now," said **Peter LaBarbera**, spokesman for the Illinois Family Institute, a conservative group behind the Protect Marriage Initiative, reports the Associated Press. "We're sad it's not going to be on there, but we've decided not to challenge the court's decision anymore."

The group has been pushing for an advisory referendum asking voters whether they want the Illinois Constitution rewritten to bar same-sex marriages. State law already prohibits gay marriage.

The appellate decision was the third blow to the movement. Previously, the state Board of Elections threw out the referendum because, among other things, a sampling showed the petitions would likely have fewer than 260,000 valid signatures, short of the 283,000 required. The group had turned in some 347,000 initially.

The group challenged the ruling in court, but lost. Last week a federal appeals court refused to reinstate the lawsuit.

After that, a federal court judge rejected pleas that the state's election laws were unconstitutional. Attorneys for Protect Marriage Illinois had then taken their case to the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago.

LaBarbera told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* that "hundreds of thousands of dollars" had been spent in the fight.

The referendum had also faced stiff opposition from gay and civil rights groups, including Equality Illinois and the American Civil Liberties Union, which checked the signatures themselves and praised the appeals court's decision.

"They lost every step of the way," said **Rick Garcia**, political director for Equality Illinois, to the *Post-Dispatch*.

Proponents of the referendum had hoped to ride the same wave of public opinion that led voters in 11 states—from Georgia to Oregon—to pass amendments in November 2004 limiting marriage to between a man and a woman.

The referendum in Illinois, had it appeared on the ballot, would have been only an advisory vote intended to spur legislators to act.

Some opponents of gay marriage criticized the state Republican Party for not supporting the referendum.

"They weren't any help at all. They've ran away from this thing," **Jack Roeser**, who heads the Family Taxpayers Network, told the AP.

State Treasurer **Judy Baar Topinka**, the party's candidate for governor, openly opposed the referendum. Meanwhile, the state GOP marshaled its efforts elsewhere.

"The Illinois Republican Party had limited resources," its executive director, **John Tsarpalas**, said to The AP. "We chose to put our money and time into our candidates' campaigns."

LaBarbera told the AP that the Illinois Family Institute is likely to try again in 2008.

Written By Troy Espera