

Pastor Says Prayer Stopped Gay Marriage

Voters in California, Arizona and Florida passed amendments to their state constitutions defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman.



[] Every ballot measure banning gay marriage passed in Tuesday's general election, and a pastor from Southern California believes prayer and fasting was what catapulted his state's Proposition 8 across the finish line.

"This is a pretty massive statement of what can happen when pastors stand up and good people stand up to be counted," said San Diego-based Skyline Church Pastor Jim Garlow, who helped mobilize thousands of conservative voters statewide. "California is a pretty unlikely place to have gay marriage stopped, considering what we faced against Hollywood and the media here."

Hailed as a major victory for proponents of traditional marriage California's Proposition 8, by far the most-watched ballot in the nation, passed 52 to 48 percent, effectively reversing a state Supreme Court decision earlier this year that legalized gay marriage.

Depending on legal proceedings, Proposition 8 could nullify thousands of gay marriages performed in the state since June. "It goes to the courts," Garlow said. "We say yes, nullify [the gay marriages]. They say no."

Maggie Gallagher, president of National Organization for Marriage, said in a statement that Californians of every creed, color and party were united in rebuking four judges who tried to impose their marriage values on the whole state. "This vote," she said, "like earlier votes in Wisconsin, Oregon and Michigan, affirms that when it comes to marriage there is no such thing as a blue state or a red state."

More than 60 percent of voters in Florida passed Amendment 2 while 56 percent of voters in Arizona passed Proposition 102—both of which amend their state constitutions to outlaw gay marriage, even though same-sex marriage was against the law in both states before Tuesday's election.

Tony Perkins, president of the Washington-based Family Research Council, told *Charisma* that conservative voters in the presidential election appeared to be more concerned with the economy than with moral issues. "It's interesting that of the three states that passed marriage amendments, two of those three states—California and Florida—voted for Barack Obama," he noted. "Clearly those [voters] are not in line with his social policies."

Exit polling revealed a huge majority of African-American voters, many of them drawn to the voting booth by Obama's candidacy, voted for Proposition 8.

"The marriage issue transcends race and class," said Wendy Wright, president of Concerned Woman for America. "The principles of the [conservative] movement that we champion are good for everyone."

Noting that the black and Latino vote was critical for passing Proposition 8, California pastor Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, said the ballot measure was a perfect example of the power churches have when they work across ethnic lines.

"Here's what this election demonstrates—white evangelicals by themselves cannot win elections," Rodriguez said. "White evangelicals by themselves cannot preserve a biblical worldview or a biblical agenda within American political and public policy arena. It is impossible. 2008 said it is over."

Garlow said mobilizing conservatives to create a groundswell of support for Proposition 8 was not easy, since gay rights activists allegedly used intimidation tactics before Election Day in an attempt to disrupt public support for the measure.

He described cars displaying "Yes on 8" stickers being keyed and vandalized, protect-marriage advocates being physically assaulted and even a pastor who publicly supported the measure threatened with death.

"We executed what we're told was the largest grassroots movement ever," he said. "We likely had around 70,000 people helping to get out the vote on Tuesday."

Alan Chambers, president of Florida-based Exodus International, attributed the success of the amendments to Christians at the grassroots level. Though he lives in Orlando, he said he was most intimately involved with helping to pass California's highly contentious Proposition 8. "I think that we have [the Church] to thank," he said, "for championing the cause of marriage."

Chambers cautioned Christians to not gloat in victory nor neglect their ministry to the gay communities that opposed Proposition 8. "It's a measure that I backed ... but I hope that we as compassionate conservative Christians ... will remember that there are broken hearts [in the gay community] and we in the Church should be the first ones to go and help mend those broken hearts through Jesus Christ."

In late September, thousands of Christians joined Garlow on a statewide 40-day fast leading up to the vote on Proposition 8. He said he also held conference calls, with as many as 3,000 pastors on the line at once. "I don't take credit for any of this," he said. "The foundation of this all was prayer."

Last Saturday at Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego, Garlow and more than 30,000 others joined Lou Engle of TheCall for 12 hours of fasting and intense prayer. He said around 4:30 p.m., during a two-hour block of prayer that he was assigned to lead, "something broke in the heavenlies."

"We knew right then that we had the victory," he said, referring to Proposition 8.

On the day after the measure was passed, thousands of gay rights activists in California protested in the streets of Hollywood. In addition, lawsuits were immediately filed with California's high court on behalf of same-sex couples arguing that the new amendment to the constitution was really a "revision" that should have required legislative approval before going before voters. **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**