

Traditional Marriage Supporters to File Ballot Initiative in D.C.

✖ Christian leaders in the District of Columbia said they will continue to fight for traditional marriage even though a D.C. Superior Court judge on Tuesday dismissed a motion that could have allowed voters to decide whether gay marriages performed elsewhere would be recognized in the nation's capital.

The Stand 4 Marriage D.C. coalition, led by Bishop Harry Jackson of Hope Christian Church in Beltsville, Md., said it will file for a ballot initiative with the Board of Elections and Ethics that would allow District residents to determine how marriage is defined.

"Ironically our political leadership demands that D.C. votes be counted in national elections, yet now these same politicians have acted to deny voters the right that 30 other states in America have already exercised-the right to vote on whether gay marriage should be legalized," Jackson said. "No bureaucrat or judge should silence the voters of this great city."

Judge Judith Retchin on Tuesday denied a preliminary injunction that would have allowed a referendum on a statute that allows the District to recognize same-sex unions performed elsewhere. The measure, passed by the D.C. Council in early May, will likely become law July 6 after a congressional review of the law is completed. Observers say Congress is unlikely to intervene in the legislation.

In her decision, Retchin agreed with a June ruling by the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics, which claimed that the proposed referendum would violate the city's Human Rights Act.

Retchin said the act makes it “unlawful for the government to deny services or benefits based on membership in a protected category,” pointing to statistics from the Gay & Lesbian Activists Alliance claiming there are roughly 200 rights afforded to married heterosexual couples that are denied same sex couples who are legally married.

Retchin also rejected the argument that *Dean vs. District of Columbia* bars the court from determining that a referendum would violate the human rights act. In the 1995 case, an appeals court determined that “there cannot be discrimination against a same-sex marriage if, by independent statutory definition extended to the Human Rights Act, there can be no such thing.”

But Retchin said since 1995 seven of the eight gender-specific provisions in the marriage statute cited in *Dean* have been amended to make them gender-neutral.

Jackson called the judgment “absurd.”

“Our laws have always recognized that marriage is between a man and a woman,” he said. “This is the law in 44 states and at the federal level. The real human rights issue at stake in this decision is whether the people of D.C. will be given their right to vote.

“We are going to continue to fight for the rights of our citizens to be able to decide this important matter that would allow the institution of marriage to be radically redefined.”