

After Rhode Island, Is Gay Marriage 'Inevitable'?

Rhode Island became the 10th state to approve **same-sex marriage**, and the Delaware Legislature holds a key vote on May 9 on the same issue. But Brian Brown, president of the National Organization for Marriage, denies there is a national tide in support of marriage rights for gay couples.

"I don't know that I would say Rhode Island is a trend," Brown said, also questioning victories for supporters of **gay marriage** initiatives in Maine, Maryland and Washington state last November.

"Again, we're talking about states that are not necessarily indicative of the rest of the country. These are pretty deep-blue, liberal states we're talking about."

Even so, Brown, the head of the leading national organization opposing **same-sex marriage**, finds himself playing defense as more Americans support same-sex marriage and more state legislatures debate measures authorizing it.

In an interview, Brown blasted "cultural elites" for demonizing supporters of traditional marriage and warned Republican officeholders of the perils of supporting same-sex marriage proposals.

Meanwhile, in Providence late Thursday afternoon, the Rhode Island House of Representatives voted 56-15 to give final approval to a bill legalizing **gay marriage**. Legislators then broke out in a spontaneous singing of "My Country 'Tis of Thee," and Gov. Lincoln Chafee signed the bill in a ceremony on the steps of the state capitol.

All six New England states now allow same-sex marriage.

"A historic realignment is happening all around us," said Chafee, a former Republican senator who said he became an independent in part because of the GOP's stance on social issues. In an interview on MSNBC, the governor predicted the measure would carry economic and other benefits.

"I want Rhode Island to be one of those hip, happening places, and tolerance is part of it," he said.

On Tuesday, the Delaware Senate is slated to vote on a bill authorizing **same-sex marriage** that passed the House last week. "In Delaware, it's going to be a tough fight," Brown acknowledged, calling it another solidly Democratic state.

But he was more optimistic about defeating gay marriage proposals elsewhere. In Illinois, he said supporters of a bill that passed the state Senate remain short of passage in the House, in part because of opposition from African-American Democratic legislators.

In Minnesota, he said opponents had "a very good chance of winning" against a bill that has cleared House and Senate committees. In New Jersey, he predicted Democratic efforts to overturn Gov. Chris Christie's veto of a bill authorizing same-sex marriage weren't "going to go anywhere."

In Oregon, he predicted advocates of same-sex marriage would succeed in getting a proposed constitutional amendment on the 2014 ballot that would reverse a ban on gay marriage voters passed a decade earlier. "I think we can win that vote even though Oregon, again, is viewed as a very liberal state," Brown said.

He blamed Hollywood, academia and the mainstream media for advocating **gay marriage** and demonizing its opponents.

"The reality is that a lot of our cultural elite, in the media and academia, in Hollywood, have embraced a totally new conception of marriage, and they're using their positions to

try to make this new conception the norm and try to make people believe it's inevitable," he said.

"And the goal of this whole inevitability argument is to sap the will of the majority of Americans to even fight on the issue, and that is not going to happen."

A Pew Research Center poll in March found 70 percent of the millennial generation, those born after 1980, support same-sex marriage. Does that make its expansion inevitable over time?

"Well, of course it's a challenge," Brown said. "But this idea that somehow young people's ideas are fixed and as they grow older they won't change their ideas is not true. We believed all sorts of things when we were younger that we no longer believe."

Chad Griffin, head of the Human Rights Campaign, has said that support for gay marriage was increasing as more Americans became aware of gay men and lesbians they knew personally. Brown disputed that as an argument.

"This is not about the civil rights of the folks that live down the hall," Brown said. "This is about redefining a public truth, a public good."

He warned Republican officeholders that supporting same-sex marriage "is a career-ending move." Of Ohio Sen. Rob Portman, who recently announced he was switching positions in support, Brown said: "He's guaranteed a primary."