

Christian Groups Lobby to Protect Traditional Marriage

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✖ Christians nationwide are mobilizing to oppose gay marriage as a landmark trial under way in California seeks to determine whether limiting marriage to one man and one woman is constitutional.

The federal trial, which opened in San Francisco Monday, will decide the constitutionality of Proposition 8, a voter-passed amendment that banned gay marriage in California. The case is likely to be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which could ultimately decide whether to uphold or nullify marriage laws in 45 states and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which prohibits federal recognition of same-sex marriage.

"It's impossible to overstate the importance of this case to the future of marriage in America," Ron Prentice, executive director of , told Focus on the Family's CitizenLink. "Not only is the constitutionality of California's Prop. 8 at stake, but so are the marriage laws of 45 other states and the federal Defense of Marriage Act. Prayers and support have sustained us and give us confidence that we will prevail in this historic battle."

San Diego pastor Jim Garlow, who led California's Yes on 8 campaign, joined 100 church leaders in Washington, D.C., Monday for a National Marriage Summit aimed at developing strategies to preserve traditional marriage nationwide and to protect DOMA, which President Obama has said he hopes to repeal.

Convened by Bishop Harry Jackson, a Maryland pastor and

chairman of the Stand4Marriage DC Coalition, the summit began Monday and ended Tuesday with a press conference on Capitol Hill lobbying Congress to uphold DOMA. Participants included Family Research Council President Tony Perkins and the Rev. Sammy Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

"The institution of marriage is in grave danger," said Jackson, who has been at the forefront of a battle to keep gay marriage from becoming law in Washington, D.C.

"The redefinition of marriage will permanently impact businesses, education and the family unit without the voice of the residents being heard, and all traditional marriage supporters need tools to confront the battles ahead," Jackson added.

The group of mostly African-American ministers also delivered a letter to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton and Congressional Black Caucus Chair Barbara Lee calling on lawmakers to allow District of Columbia residents to vote on the definition of marriage. They also want Congress to veto a bill passed in December that legalized gay marriage in the district. The measure is currently awaiting a required 30-day congressional review.

"If the recent DC same sex-marriage law is allowed to stand, people all around the nation will ask, 'Why did Congress allow the city to violate the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)?'" the letter states. "Many will assume that this is simply another instance of special interest groups usurping the rights of the people or partisan politics at work once again."

Meanwhile, more than 750 traditional marriage activists calling on Iowa lawmakers to put the definition of marriage to a vote rallied at the Statehouse Tuesday as Gov. Chet Culver gave his condition of the state address.

"This is ... just a visual reminder to the governor and to the Legislature that the people of Iowa are watching," said Bryan English, a spokesman for the Iowa Family Policy Center, which organized the marriage rally and is mobilizing a grass-roots lobbying effort for a marriage amendment.

The Iowa Supreme Court legalized gay marriage in April, but unlike states such as Maine and California, voters cannot reverse the ruling by referendum.

In order for a marriage amendment to be put before voters, the Iowa House and Senate must pass identical resolutions calling for a statewide vote on the definition of marriage. The House and Senate votes must be followed by an intervening election, then both chambers must pass marriage resolutions with identical language a second time.

"This is a multiple-year process requiring diligence on the part of Iowans to not only continue to apply pressure but to keep people in office who support the marriage amendment and replace those who don't," English said.

The Iowa Family Policy Center hopes to see rally participants visit the Statehouse every day until the legislative session ends.

English said there are enough votes in the Legislature to pass marriage amendment resolutions, but Democratic leaders in both chambers said they would obstruct the process.

"If they refuse to listen to the people of Iowa ... then they will have to be placed in the minority," English said. "That would require waiting until after the next election or two. This is a long-term process, and we understand that it will take many years, but the people of Iowa are very committed to seeing it through. ... Unless the people have an opportunity to vote on something of this importance, the authority of the Constitution is in jeopardy."