

French Upper House Backs Same-Sex Marriage Law

France's Senate upper house voted in favor of same-sex marriage on Friday, paving the way for it to enter law after street marches rallied hundreds of thousands of demonstrators both for and against it.

The move is France's most significant social reform since the 1981 abolition of the death penalty and was a keynote campaign pledge by President Francois Hollande's ruling Socialists.

But it is opposed by social conservatives in the majority Catholic country, and by many French Muslims and evangelical Christians.

The bill, approved by a show of hands with minor amendments, returns in May to the National Assembly lower house where the Socialists have an absolute majority. After final approval there, it is due to take effect mid-year.

France joins 11 other countries including Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Norway and South Africa where same-sex marriage is legal.

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