

Maryland Recognizes Gay Marriage, for Now

With the stroke of a pen, Maryland became the eighth state to legalize gay marriage on Thursday as Gov. Martin O'Malley signed the measure into law.

Homosexual couples in the state will be able to be legally married in January of 2013.

However, opponents are still hoping for a chance to reverse the law and are trying to gather enough signatures to petition for a referendum on this year's ballot.

If successful, Maryland voters would get the chance to decide the fate of gay marriage in their state in the November election.

"We will have the last say on how marriage will be defined in Maryland," Maryland Marriage Alliance spokeswoman Dee Powell said during Sunday services at Hope Christian Church in Beltsville.

Some believe the influence of black churches in the state may have an impact on whether gay marriage will be allowed to remain.

Many African-American church leaders oppose gay marriage in the liberal-leaning state that's nearly one-third black.

Opponents will need to collect nearly 56,000 valid voter signatures, equivalent to 3 percent of the people who cast ballots in the 2010 gubernatorial election, to put the measure on the November ballot. Even gay marriage advocates expect the referendum to end up on the ballot.

Six other states and Washington, D.C., recognize gay marriages. Washington State's new gay marriage law is

scheduled to take effect in June, but voters there are also expected to petition the measure to be on a referendum this fall.