

Rhode Island Lawmakers Pass Gay Marriage Bill

Rhode Island lawmakers gave final approval to a bill to legalize gay marriage on Thursday, making it the 10th U.S. state to extend marriage rights to **same-sex** couples and the last of the six New England states to do so.

Governor Lincoln Chafee, an independent, said he would sign the bill into law immediately after the vote on Thursday. The new law will take effect on August 1.

Last week, the Democratic-led state Senate approved the measure with the support of the entire Republican caucus. The state House had approved a similar bill in January and on Thursday approved the Senate's amended bill.

The vote marks the latest in a string of victories for **gay marriage** advocates. Last November, voters in Maine, Maryland and Washington state approved same-sex marriage, while in Minnesota, voters rejected a constitutional amendment that would have defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

Before that point, advocates of **same-sex marriage** had never been successful at the ballot box, and voters in more than two dozen states had approved constitutional amendments defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

Lawmakers in Illinois, Delaware and Minnesota have joined Rhode Island in taking up **same-sex marriage** legislation this year. New Jersey Democrats, meanwhile, have until next January to attempt to override Governor Chris Christie's veto of a same-sex marriage bill in that state.

The other six states that have legalized **same-sex marriage** are Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire

and Iowa.

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