

Rhode Island Set to Legalize Gay Marriage

Rhode Island lawmakers were expected to give final approval to a bill legalizing **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.

Gov. Lincoln Chafee, an independent, was expected to sign the bill into law following a largely procedural vote in the Democratic-controlled state House of Representatives set for Thursday afternoon. The new law would take effect starting Aug. 1.

Last week, the Democratic-led state Senate approved the measure with strong Republican support. The state House had approved a similar bill in January and was expected to approve the Senate's amended version on Thursday.

State Sen. Donna Nesselbush, a sponsor of the bill, described herself as "ecstatic" following the vote.

"I thank my colleagues for making Rhode Island the 10th state to join the force for marriage equality that is sweeping our nation," she said.

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 Gov. 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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