

Virginia Voters Back Gay Marriage, Young People Lead the Charge

A majority of Virginia voters support gay marriage, according to a poll released on Monday, which comes as a lawsuit to strike down the state's ban on same-sex unions is headed to federal appeals court.

Some 50 percent of voters in Virginia backed **gay marriage**, while 42 percent opposed it, a Quinnipiac University poll said.

Same-sex marriage is recognized in 17 states and the District of Columbia.

The strongest support is from young people, with 69 percent of Virginia voters aged 18 to 29 backing gay marriage and 25 percent opposing it, according to the Quinnipiac poll.

Women support same-sex marriage by a margin of 54 percent to 38 percent.

Men narrowly oppose gay unions, by a margin of 48 percent to 46 percent, the poll showed.

Same-sex marriage has been on the front lines of Virginia politics since Attorney General Mark Herring, a Democrat, said in January that he would not defend the state's constitutional ban on gay marriage.

A federal judge struck down Virginia's ban in February but stayed execution of her order pending an appeal to the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond.

A three-judge appeals court panel is scheduled to hear oral arguments in May.

The poll also looked at Virginia voters' attitudes on marijuana. Medical marijuana was supported by 84 percent of respondents, with 13 percent opposed.

Opponents narrowly outnumbered supporters of legalizing marijuana for recreational use, with 48 percent against and 46 percent in favor.

The Quinnipiac poll of 1,288 voters was taken March 19 to March 24 and had a margin of error of 2.7 percentage points.

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