

EDITORIALS

A Breakthrough Election

Happy gays are here again!

November 13, 2006

The Midterm votes are counted, and for a change The LGBT community has reason to celebrate (even the gay Republicans).

This might not seem obvious. Anti-gay marriage amendments passed in seven states, bringing the total to 27 states in the union.

But—drum roll, please—Arizona became the first state to defeat an amendment against same-sex marriage equality. And the margin by which these hateful amendments pass is shrinking. In general, the support has dropped from 70 percent in 2004 to between 50–59 percent this year.

Matt Foreman, executive director of The National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, called Arizona a "breakthrough state." And it is. That doesn't mean that the battle is over or that we can lower our guards. It means that a turning point has been reached and, it is hoped, the scales are now tipping in our favor.

An Oct. 27–31, 2006, New York Times/CBS News poll found that 55 percent of respondents favored either full marriage equality or civil unions for gay couples. And a Nov. 5-6, 2006, Fox News/Opinion Dynamics poll found that 60 percent favored legal recognition for same-sex couples—30 percent favoring marriage and 30 percent favoring "a legal partnership similar to but not called marriage." Only 32 percent of likely voters believed that same-sex couples should have no legal recognition.

As Human Rights Campaign president Joe Solmonese said, civil-rights struggles are not won overnight, through the course of one victorious election. "In this modern-day world, we get a little impatient about how long this awesome civil-rights struggle will take," he said. "This is a decade-long or more struggle."

Many homophobic leaders have been tossed out of Congress (bye-bye Santorum! You're next, Musgrave!). The Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund said that 67 of the 88 the candidates it endorsed across the country were elected.

And according to the National Center for Transgender Equality, Hawaii elected the first openly transgender person to a statewide office. Kim Coco Iwamoto garnered a seat on the state's board of education.

"In New York, we elected Governor Eliot Spitzer, who during a visit to The LGBT Center last year, went on record in support of marriage equality, improved insurance practices for domestic partners and transgender nondiscrimination legislation," pointed out Richard Burns, the executive director of New York City's LGBT Center.

We can look forward to a decrease of the hate speech the homophobic "leaders" spread. No longer will President Bush and Congress have cart blanche to attack LGBT families.

The Democrats have taken control of the U.S. Senate and House, but this doesn't mean that LGBT issues will be front and center come January. The war and the economy must be dealt with—no small issues.