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Did you attend North Carolina Pride?  
Yes . No

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## Will N.C. turn its back on gays with marriage ban?

Gaston County Senator seeks to amend state constitution and ban gay marriages

by Donald Miller

Sen. Jim Forrester (R-Gaston), the newly-chosen Senate Minority Leader, filed a bill May 11 that seeks to amend the North Carolina Constitution to discriminate against the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

In order to become part of the Constitution, the amendment would first need to pass the North Carolina House and Senate by a three-fifths margin and be put to a vote by the people.

A state law in place since 1996 says North Carolina does not recognize gay marriages performed in other states, but Forrester, who sponsored the 1996 law, says expanding the ban to the constitution would prevent litigation from same-sex couples married in other states who come to North Carolina and argue that the statute is unconstitutional.

"We ought to let the people decide and let them vote on it," Forrester said. "That will insulate North Carolina from legal challenges in state courts."

"I think the vast majority of people would be voting as marriage as between one man and one woman."

The bill would ask voters statewide to check yes or no to the following statement: "Constitutional amendment to provide that marriage is the union of one man and one woman at one time, and this is the only marriage that shall be recognized as valid in this state."

About 20 fellow senators have signed up as co-sponsors, he said, including two

Democrats. "It's not a partisan bill, it's a family issue bill," Forrester said.

LGBT political action groups in North Carolina were quick to respond to the proposed amendment.

"Our state legislators have important issues to consider this session: taxation, education, health care, and others. Yet, the minority leader is focusing his efforts on trying to write bigotry into our State Constitution," said Ian Palmquist, Equality NC executive director of programs. "This is nothing more than an election-year ploy to mobilize radical right voters, and we cannot allow it to pass."

"North Carolina already discriminates against same-sex couples by denying us the right to marry, but Sen. Forrester's bill would elevate that discrimination to the constitutional level," said Ed Farthing, Equality NC executive director of development. "The bill also seeks to deny recognition of same-sex domestic partnerships, civil unions, or other similar relationships recognized in other states. I am appalled that the leader of the Republican Party in the North Carolina Senate is spending his valuable time on an issue that does not improve the lives of the citizens of our state."

Religious supporters of same-sex marriage announced at a press conference May 12 that the proposed constitutional amendment banning the practice amounts to "codifying into law" one particular biblical interpretation.

About 50 people attended the news con-

ference held in front of the Legislative Building in Raleigh that was sponsored by the North Carolina Religious Coalition for Marriage Equality (NCRMC). Many held signs declaring "I'm Baptist," "I'm Jewish," "I'm Methodist."

"The debate over marriage equality in our society is a power struggle," said the Rev.



Gaston County Sen. Jim Forrester wants to codify into the N.C. Constitution a ban on same-sex marriage.

Jack McKinney from Raleigh's Pullen Memorial Baptist Church. "Like all other justice struggles, the majority is unwilling to give up its sense of privilege easily."

McKinney, Rabbi Lucy H.F. Dinner from Temple Beth Or in Raleigh and other clergy cited Bible scripture that calls for justice and noted the Bible's teaching that people are created "in the divine image." NCRMC is reportedly circulating a petition in support of gay marriage that they say has been signed by 137 religious leaders from around the state.

In the event the amendment does in fact pass the House and Senate, it will be placed before the voters on the November ballot, where a simple majority is required for passage.

## Charlotte coalition puts gay marriage in the spotlight

Male couple applies for marriage license; organization holds rally

by David Stout  
Q-Notes staff

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Sprouting from an idea planted at a house party just six months ago, the Coalition for Marriage Equality of Charlotte-Mecklenburg County has rapidly grown into an ambitious social justice organization dedicated to bringing the same-sex marriage battle to this typically button-down metropolis.

The group began its advocacy work in earnest this month by sponsoring two high-



Mick (left) and Gene Hinson's request for a marriage license was denied.

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## Controversy surrounds death of Durham County man

Three men on trial for beating death of Sean Ethan Owen

by Donald Miller

DURHAM COUNTY, N.C. — A growing controversy is surrounding the surprising lack of coverage of the impending murder trial for three African-American men accused of murdering 23-year-old Sean Ethan Owen, who was openly gay and caucasian.

Many in the LGBT community see the lack of concern by the media for the proceedings as a lack of interest in minority on minority crimes, while others feel that some more liberal news outlets are turning away from the story in an effort to prevent a wedge from developing between the LGBT and African-



Matthew Lawrence Taylor is accused of being the trigger man in the murder of Sean Ethan Owen.

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