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*from the palmetto state*

**S.C. Senate amends and approves amendment banning same-sex marriage**

by Linda Ketner and Donald Miller

COLUMBIA — The S.C. Senate approved its version of a constitutional amendment that would bar recognition of same-sex marriages with a 36-1 vote April 13, which will bring the amendment before voters in Nov. 2006.



**Sen. Robert Ford:** 'The separation of church and state is in our constitution for a reason. Religion has no place in politics.'

Ketner, chairperson of the South Carolina Equality Coalition. "We simply seek what all other South Carolinians already have: the rights and responsibilities which protect our families. We hope that the legislature will

Approved and then amended, H3133 describes "marriage" as "between one man and one woman," although it allows for the possibility of civil unions for same-gender partners.

"The gay and lesbian community is asking only for basic fairness," says Linda

implement civil union legislation to fulfill our Constitution's promise of equal protection under the law."

Only one dissenting vote among the senate's 46 members was forthcoming — from Sen. Robert Ford (D-Charleston). Several other legislators seated in the senate chamber simply did not vote as their names were called.

**Linda Ketner reporting from the senate chambers**  
Beginning with an impassioned speech by Sen. Ford, which was followed by a "consensus amendment" to remove the "putative union" language, the session lasted about an hour.

The amendment to ban gay marriage was sponsored by Sens. Campsen (Charleston), Hutto (Orangeburg), Hawkins (Spartanburg), Malloy (Darlington) and McConnell (Charleston).

*Here is a brief description of what each speaker on the bill said in order of appearance:*

**Sen. Ford** told the body that there are 400,000 gays and lesbians who vote, and that the legislators' responsibility is to represent all the people, including the LGBT community. He told the body that the gay community was an easy target to pick on — just as blacks and Native Americans had been at one time.

"I hope someday soon in our state and in our nation, religious people will stop beating up on people. The senate is a political and not a religious body. The separation of church and state is in our constitution for a reason and religion has no place in politics."

**Sen. Knotts** (R-Lexington County) said

that before the hearings he believed in the sanctity of marriage ... and after the hearings he believed in the sanctity of marriage because "it is in the Bible!" He quoted Genesis ... God made Adam ... made Eve as a companion of the opposite sex ... "not Steve but Eve! And, he did it for a reason, for the respect and unity of a man and a woman."

**Sen. Hawkins** (R-Spartanburg) wanted to make sure that all knew he didn't present the Marriage Amendment because he was a bigot or wants to discriminate against the LGBT community. "I hope you don't think it's in my heart," Hawkins said. He went on to indicate that he was motivated as an attorney about judicial law-making and the federal judiciary being out of control.

"If later generations want to change what we've done, they can do it, but it will have to go to the people of the state. Sure it's a higher standard — and that's how it should be."

**Sen. Jackson** (D-Richland) warned the body against legislating moral issues. He said that although he was a minister, as was his father and his grandfather, he believed that people had a right to make their own decisions and their own moral decisions. "In religion we refer to winning converts, not forcing converts," Jackson said. "And that is even more true in politics, where morality should not be mandated. I don't know everything, but I do know that God loves everyone."

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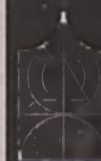
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