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# TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY?

*Anti-gay Amendment One heads to May 2012 ballot*

## Campaigns take root

*Equality North Carolina gears up campaign against Amendment One*

by Matt Comer matt@goqnotes.com

RALEIGH — Voters will head to the polls on May 8, 2012, to vote on an anti-LGBT constitutional amendment that will ban marriage, civil unions and domestic partnerships for same-sex couples. The measure, "Amendment One," could also have dire consequences for scores of unmarried opposite-sex couples.

The legislation putting the amendment on the ballot was approved in less than 24 hours worth of consideration by members of the North Carolina General Assembly. The bill passed the House on Sept. 12 and gained the slimmest three-fifths majority it needed to pass the Senate on Sept. 13. Amendment One opponents have criticized Republican legislative leaders for the way in which they handled the bill. For one, they say leaders silenced opposition and pushed the amendment through the committee process without any public input from citizens or legal scholars.

"The second strategic mistake they made was that it was so hastily and sloppily written," said Equality North Carolina Interim Executive Director Alex Miller. "They didn't take the time to ensure what they were putting forward for inclusion in the constitution is what will actually be put in front of voters."

The bill approved by the legislature would amend the state constitution by adding, "Marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State. This section does not prohibit a private party from entering into contracts with another private party; nor does this section prohibit courts from adjudicating the rights of private parties pursuant to such contracts."

Yet, the question voters will consider states simply, "Constitutional amendment to provide that marriage between one man and one woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this State."

Miller said there are "real constitutional questions" regarding the wording of the amendment and the ballot question. The issue was raised at a debate on Sept. 21 at the University of North Carolina School of Law between House Majority Leader Rep.

Paul Stam (R-Wake) and Rep. Rick Glazier (D-Cumberland).

"Neither of them nor the professors present who are constitutional scholars could answer the question," Miller said, indicating he was not aware of any current legal challenge to the amendment's wording.

At the center of debate is the amendment's phrase, "domestic legal union." Miller and several constitutional law scholars have said the phrase is too broad and vague.

"They passed an amendment that makes invalid any legal recognition for any relation besides a traditional man-woman marriage," Miller said. "This bill will affect same-sex and opposite-sex couples, senior citizens and domestic violence victims."

Advocates say Amendment One's broad implications and consequences will mean extra support in the nearly eight-month-long campaign to defeat the measure at the polls.

### Gearing up

Within days of the amendment's legislative approval, citizens across the state took to Facebook and Twitter to organize against the ballot measure. Grassroots activists, too, began getting their hands wet. In Boiling Springs, N.C., friends began their "Neighbors for Equality" campaign and others are speaking out in their own, individual ways (see story, page 11).

As of press time, Equality North Carolina had yet to announce their formal campaign against Amendment One. But, Miller said planning was already underway and strategies being discussed and laid out.

"We're now in the process of creating the campaign and it will happen over the next several weeks," Miller said. "I can't tell you when exactly, but I can say it is less important for us to have a campaign logo or slogan before we make sure we have a strong campaign strategy."

Miller said the group's pre-existing strategies had been structured for a ballot referendum in a general election. Legislators changed their plans and placed the amendment on May's primary ballot, instead. Miller

see *Equality* on 6

## Youth: Amendment sends bad message

*Politically-active gay young people speak out*

CHAPEL HILL — At just 22, Lee Storrow hopes he'll become Chapel Hill's youngest council member since then 21-year-old Mark Chilton was elected to the body in 1991.

Storrow, who is openly gay, is a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the managing director of the North Carolina Alliance for Health. He also serves on the board of directors of the American Legacy Foundation, a group founded from the 1998 settlement with the nation's major tobacco companies. He's stressed public transportation, affordable housing and expanding the town's tax base as key issues in his campaign.

"There is a need to have someone on council who is a coalition builder and who will do the work to reach out to all residents,

particularly young people," Storrow said. "A third of Chapel Hill's population is under 24 years old and without our voice at the table we don't get policy solutions that are as best for our town as they could be."

Storrow faces a crowded field in the election this year, to be held on Nov. 8. In the midst of his campaign for office, Storrow was keenly aware of the legislative fight brewing over an anti-LGBT constitutional amendment that seeks to ban recognition of marriage, civil unions and domestic partnerships for same-sex couples. When lawmakers approved its placement on a May 8, 2012 primary ballot, Storrow took pause.

see *Amendment* on 6



After nearly eight years of trying, anti-gay state Sen. James Forrester (R-Gaston) has finally succeeded in gaining legislative approval for his so-called Defense of Marriage amendment. It sparked protest statewide when it was first introduced in 2004 at the height of controversy surrounding a proposed anti-gay amendment to the federal constitution. Above: On May 5, 2004, former Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte Pastor Mick Hinson and partner Greg were among those speaking out against Forrester's amendment. They attempted to file for a marriage license in Mecklenburg County and were denied. "There is not justice in the world regarding [same-sex] relationships — period," Hinson said at the time.

— File Photo

25<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary  
1986-2011