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Q.POLL**
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If current political trends continue, would you consider relocating to another country with a more gay-friendly atmosphere?

Yes . No

In the next issue:
Businesses in the Carolinas

N.C. Marriage Amendment, round two

N.C. Republicans still trying to push anti-gay agenda, veiled in 'marriage protection'

by Mark Smith

After Democrats squashed all attempts last year by N.C. Republicans to bring to the table a bill that would ban same-sex marriage in North Carolina, the state's GOP senators are at it again.

Sens. Jim Forrester (R-Gaston) and Fred Smith (R-Johnston) introduced a proposed N.C. constitutional amendment Jan. 27 that would prevent same-sex couples from marrying or allow such marriages from other states local recognition.

New rules drafted by the chamber's Democratic leader, Sen. Tony Rand of Fayetteville, and passed the last week of January, will make it even more difficult for Republicans to push their anti-gay agenda, however.

The bill would require support from two-thirds of the 50 senators to debate a bill.

"We believe that a constitutional amendment that probably 70 percent of the people of North Carolina would support should be heard on the (Senate) floor," Smith said.

Same-sex marriages are already illegal under N.C. law, but the ban is not in the state constitution. Seventeen states have constitutional bans on gay marriage,

according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

The bill Forrester submitted, reads as follows:

"Marriage is the union of one man and one woman at one time. This is the only marriage that shall be recognized as valid in this State. The uniting of two persons of the same sex or the uniting of more than two persons of any sex in a marriage, civil union, domestic partnership, or other similar relationship within or outside of this State shall not be valid or recognized in this State. This Constitution shall not be construed to require that marital status or the rights, privileges, benefits, or other legal incidents of marriage be conferred upon unmarried individuals or groups."

If the House and Senate approved the amendment, voters would have their say in May 2006.

"If we're going to continue to build the society that we have, I think we need to define the institution of marriage as we've traditionally known it," said Sen. Smith.

But a gay rights activist interviewed on Raleigh's WRAL-TV saw things differently.

"You're talking about families. You're talking about making it more rigid in the constitution of this state — limiting our rights, making it specific that we have no rights as couples, as families," said Heggemeier.

Ian Palmquist, executive director of

EqualityNC, issued an immediate call to the N.C. LGBT community to aid in the fight



against legislated homophobia.

"We need to take action right now to help stop [this] attack," Palmquist said in a press statement.

"The proposal may go much further than banning same-sex marriage — which is already illegal in North Carolina — but could prohibit any sort of recognition of same-sex relationships. The amendment's sponsors are looking for co-sponsors now, so write your legislators today and ask them not to sign on."

Take action online:
www.equalitync.org/actioncenter

LGBT groups respond to State of the Union address

Bush reiterates support for anti-gay marriage amendment

by Donald Miller

In his Feb. 2 State of the Union address President George W. Bush talked at length about the need for social security reform, despite an interview with the *Washington Post*, in which he stated that he would not pursue the *Federal Marriage Amendment* during his new term, it came as no surprise that he felt the need to address the issue once again following a backlash from anti-gay conservative supporters who threatened to stymie Bush's social security overhaul if he did not maintain support of the *FMA*.



"Our second great responsibility to our children and grandchildren is to honor and to pass along the values that sustain a free society," said Bush. "So many of my generation, after a long journey, have come home to family and faith and are determined to bring up responsible, moral children. Government is not the source of these values, but government should never undermine them."

"Because marriage is a sacred institution and the foundation of society, it should not be re-defined by activist judges. For the good of families, children and society, I support a constitutional amendment to protect the institution of marriage."

Reaction from LGBT advocacy groups across the country has been swift and condemning.

"Once again, President Bush contradicts himself," **see BUSH on 17**

Charlotte Pride under attack again by OSA

Group using event to go after Charlotte's LGBT community

by Donald Miller

At a Charlotte City Council meeting during the last week of January, around 100 members of the Concord-based anti-gay organization Operation Save America (OSA) urged the Charlotte City Council to deny Charlotte Pride a license for their annual LGBT pride festival, which has been held in the city's downtown Marshall Park annually since 2000.

OSA practically took over the meeting, taking all of the slots available at the council's public forum. Many of them complained about photos at a gay men's nudist booth and performances by drag queens at Pride 2004. Not surprisingly, **see OSA on 4**



2005 will mark the fifth year Pride has been held in Charlotte's Marshall Park.