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ONLINE Q.POLL www.q-notes.com

. yes . no

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Same-sex marriage at risk in Massachusetts and Canada

In Massachusetts petitioners gather enough signatures; in Canada conservatives threaten to use 'not withstanding' clause

BOSTON — Backers of a proposed constitutional amendment that would outlaw gay marriage in Massachusetts announced on Nov. 23 they had more than twice the number of signatures needed to put the issue to voters.

Lambda Legal, however, has threatened a challenge to stop the ballot initiative

A coalition of conservative and Christian groups seeking to ban same-sex marriage had to gather at least 65,825 signatures before state lawmakers could decide whether to put the question to a public referendum in 2008.

On Nov. 23, as a deadline passed to submit the signatures to town and city clerks who must check their authenticity, jubilant officials at the Massachusetts Family Institute and other conservatives announced they had found solid support.

Massachusetts' highest court ruled in 2003 that it was unconstitutional to ban gay marriage, paving the way for America's first same-sex marriages in May the following year.

If the signatures on the petition are approved by Dec. 7, further approval would be required by 25 percent of the 200-member state Legislature over two sessions — one in 2006 and the other in 2007 — before the issue could be put to voters in 2008.

If passed, the initiative could possibly annul about 6,500 marriage licenses already issued to same-sex couples.

In Canada (Ottawa) Conservative Leader Stephen Harper has vowed to repeal same-

sex marriage rights nationwide if he is able to take control of the government.

Public Works Minister Scott Brison — the only openly gay member of the Liberal caucus — warned that Harper would turn Canada's social clock back in time.

Brison accused Harper of being at odds with Canadian values on multiculturalism, bilingualism, publicly funded health care and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

During the last week of November two right of center MPs announced the formation of a group that will target candidates who support same-sex marriage.

Ontario MP Pat O'Brien — who resigned as a Liberal this year because of the marriage issue — and ex-Tory MP Grant Hill said their organization, Defend Marriage Canada will raise money, publish letters and lobby voters to elect candidates who oppose same-sex marriage.

Critics note that to change the law, the federal government would need to invoke the Constitution's notwithstanding clause for the first time ever.

According to the organization, the group will not actively campaign for any one party, but the Conservatives will clearly get a majority of their support.

"This is very rigidly a non-partisan campaign," said O'Brien, who now sits as an Independent MP and is not running for re-election.

"But I can't help but take a moment and commend the leader of the Opposition — Mr. Harper — for indicating his openness to having a true free vote."

Hill added adamantly that Defend Marriage Canada will not work for any par-



ticular party. He also said the group plans to run a positive campaign.

"We won't be campaigning against anyone. We'll in fact be campaigning for individuals (who oppose same-sex marriage).

"We'll be encouraging Canadians in all 308 ridings to vote for pro-traditional marriage candidates."

Hill, an Alberta MP who was the interim leader of the new Conservative party, retired from politics before the 2004 election. He made news recently when he reiterated his belief that "homosexuals spread disease" and said that he believes that gays and lesbians choose their sexual orientation.

Canada's leading gay-rights group expressed concern about the alliance between O'Brien and Hill.

"Mr. O'Brien is aligning himself with someone who has made very irresponsible comments in the past and who is not a credible ally," said Gilles Marchildon, executive director of Egale Canada. People need to realize what's at stake here. If the rights of one minority can be trampled on, then what's to prevent another minority from being the target next week — or next year?"

— Canadian Wire services contributed to this report.

Conference calls for end to abuses

SEATTLE, Wash. — LGBT elected and appointed leaders from across the United States and around the world passed an historic resolution in Seattle Nov. 21 at the Gay & Lesbian Leadership Conference calling upon "all nations and governments to adopt a vocal, clear and consistent policy on international human rights abuses against LGBT people that includes a call on other countries to abolish sodomy laws."



In Iran as many as 4,000 citizens have reportedly been executed since 1979 because they are gay or lesbian.

Attendees, who travelled from as far away as Sri Lanka and Poland, vowed to continue to bring attention to the horrific record of some countries on this issue.

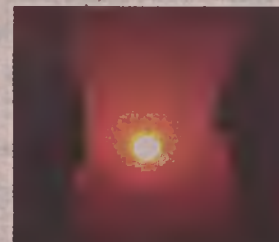
For instance: see HUMAN on 4

Notes from a gay soldier

Adjusting to life in Iraq

Editor's Note: These are the thoughts of a gay soldier — a North Carolina native — who has been deployed to Iraq. Because of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, he must remain anonymous.

The last few weeks have been amazing. I left Kuwait on a C-130 airplane and flew to a location I can't say. I was only at that particular location for a few days. I got new orders to head south toward Baghdad. I then jumped in a Humvee and headed to the airfield — have to admit I was a bit nervous. I knew that getting on the Black Hawk helicopter meant flying over unfriendly territory. It was a good ride, a quick 20 minutes south. The aircraft was packed and the diesel fumes were nearly overwhelming; thank goodness it was a short flight. I prayed a RPG (rock-



see NOTES on 4