

Fighting Marriage Discrimination at N.C. Legislature



By John Michael Watkins

At first I didn't know what to call it. Some have called such amendments "defense of marriage amendments," but that, to me, is a misnomer. Discouraging people from getting married—and not only that, but amending your state constitution to purposely invalidate their relationships—isn't at all a defense of the institution. Other states had names to theirs: Question No. 2 (Nevada, 2002), State Issue 1 (Ohio, 2004), or most famously Prop 8 (California, 2008), to name a few examples. But the amendment to ban same-sex marriage in North Carolina hasn't made it through the General Assembly, so the only name it has is Senate Bill 106.

So during the LGBT & Ally Retreat last fall, we—Caroline Johnson, Ryan Watson, and I from UNC, Derek Kiszely from Elon University, and Cecelia Blair from Meredith College—decided to orchestrate a lobby trip. With 14 other students from five universities, we met up in Raleigh on March 2nd to petition the legislature against voting for a marriage discrimination amendment.

We set out that morning with the goal of addressing

this issue not only on the social front but on an economic front as well. We met with legislators of various political affiliations, from Republican, to Democrat to what are called Dixie Democrats or socially conservative Democrats. While not all of them agreed with our assertions, too many of the legislators supporting the amendment seemed to be uneducated in LGBT issues. At some points it may have felt as if we were speaking (and sometimes chasing after) a brick wall, a few of the legislators were literally rendered speechless by some of the stories (and pictures) that *their* constituents had to share. Hopefully, we have made an impact and they may think twice about filling in that "Yes" bubble come November 6th, 2012.

Currently, an independent student at UNC named Kalyan Rao has a Change.org petition against SB106, if you want to learn more about the bill or sign the petition against it go to:

www.tinyurl.com/defeats106

