

# **Church collects letters to Congress opposing legal redefinition of marriage\_53104**

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**By Gregory Tomlin**

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FORT WORTH-Members of a Fort Worth church mailed 750 letters supporting the biblical definition of marriage to Republican Texas Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn in Washington, D.C.

Travis Avenue Baptist Church collected the letters as part of a campaign promoted by the church's Christian citizen task force. Each of the letters was written, addressed and stamped by individual members of the congregation to comply with Internal Revenue Service guidelines for political action.

Under IRS regulations, churches and other tax-exempt nonprofit groups cannot expend funds in support of candidates or legislation.

Individual members of congregations, however, can use private funds for political action.

Dillard Wilbanks, associate pastor and program ministry coordinator at

Travis Avenue, said it was significant that the church gathered actual letters "in an era of e-mail convenience."

A Mother's Day sermon by Pastor Michael Dean prompted the letter-writing campaign. Dean said the biblical definition of marriage was under attack. He insisted American churches would have to speak on the issue of same-sex marriage for the institution of marriage to survive.

He called on church members to write to their senators and congressional representatives and express their views that God had ordained marriage to be between one man and one woman.

The church's Christian citizen task force provided sample letters for both adults and young people.

Wilbanks also said it was significant that 750 letters were returned to the church with one week's notice.

"Mobilization of evangelical church members to take this initiative could well make the difference. I know of no other way to mobilize and motivate the numbers of persons necessary to have a significant impact on politicians," he said.

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