

Louisiana evangelical vote played key role in passing prohibition on same-sex marriages_100404

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Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)-Analysis of Louisiana's statewide vote to ban same-sex marriage shows that areas with a large number of evangelical Christians played a key role.

In 10 of the state's 64 parishes, voters spoke with a unified voice extraordinary in electoral politics. In those parishes, at least 90 percent of voters supported the constitutional amendment. Among the 10 were six of the most heavily evangelical parishes in the state.

Major religious groups supporting traditional marriage made passing the amendment a priority. Backers said it would protect the traditional

understanding of marriage from court decisions such as those that have opened the door to same-sex unions in other states.

LaSalle Parish in central Louisiana favored the amendment by an overwhelming 94 percent. LaSalle has the state's heaviest concentration of evangelical Christians; 81 percent of the population belong to one of several evangelical congregations, according to a 2000 survey by the Glenmary Research Center.

At the other end of the spectrum was New Orleans, where the amendment found the least support. It won there with 55 percent of the vote. The amendment attracted no less than 71 percent of the vote anywhere else.

Running up to the election, evangelical groups such as the Louisiana Family Forum launched a statewide drive on behalf of the amendment, educating pastors and encouraging them to launch voter registration drives in their churches.

Louisiana's Catholic bishops also issued a public statement urging the state's 1.5 million Catholics to vote for the amendment.

The amendment seemed to do slightly better among evangelicals than among Catholics. The level of support in the 10 most heavily evangelical parishes was 88 percent; it was 80 percent in the state's 10 most heavily Catholic parishes.

Statewide, 78 percent of voters supported the measure, meaning opponents fell well short of the 30 percent vote they had hoped for.

The amendment prohibits state judges and officials from recognizing same-sex marriage and civil unions sanctioned in other states. On Nov. 2, residents in as many as a dozen states will be voting on similar measures banning same-sex marriage.

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