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WASHINGTON (ABP)—Kansas voters made that state the 18th in the nation to adopt a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage.

With all but one of the state's 210 precincts reporting April 6, voters had approved an amendment to the Kansas Constitution banning homosexual marriage by a 70 percent margin.

Seventeen other states already have gay-marriage bans in their constitutions, 13 of which passed last year. Three more—Alabama, South Dakota and Tennessee—have scheduled votes on similar amendments in 2006.

However, the Kansas amendment goes further than most, declaring, "No relationship, other than a marriage, shall be recognized by the state as entitling the parties to the rights or incidents of marriage." That means it would ban marriage-like arrangements, such as civil unions or domestic partnerships, for unmarried couples —both heterosexual and homosexual.

Polls have shown that, while a majority of the public opposes same-sex

marriage, a plurality favors governments extending either marriage or civil-union rights to gay couples.

Three states that passed similarly broad gay-marriage bans last year — Ohio, Michigan and Utah — are now facing consequences for both gay and straight couples. In Michigan and Utah, state officials have ruled that the new laws mean state agencies can no longer offer benefits to the domestic partners of their employees, and a judge in Ohio ruled that the state's amendment made it impossible to enforce domestic-violence laws on all unmarried couples.

In a press statement, the new head of the nation's largest gay-rights group said the amendment will do "incalculable" harm to "thousands of Kansas families."

Joe Solmonese, president of the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign, added, "As voters come to understand the real consequences of this amendment, we hope they understand how wrong" it is.

Meanwhile, the leader of a national group opposed to gay marriage hailed the Kansas vote but said it is "a prelude to the real battle." Alliance for Marriage president Matt Daniels said the Kansas vote highlights the need for the proposed Marriage Protection Amendment to the federal Constitution.

"The constitutional problem created by almost a decade of activist lawsuits to destroy our marriage laws demands a constitutional fix," Daniels said. "This is because those who are seeking to strike down marriage in court will eventually turn to false arguments under the United States Constitution to try to overturn the will of the American people."

The proposed national amendment is similar to one that failed to pass both chambers of Congress last year. It and many of the state gay-marriage bans were proposed in the wake of a 2003 Massachusetts supreme court ruling

that led to that state becoming the first to offer marriage to same-sex couples on an equal basis with heterosexuals.

The Kansas defeat for gay-rights activists came on the heels of a victory in another state. Last month, Maine became the sixth state in the Union to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in employment, housing, public facilities and other accommodations.

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