

Obama victory signals shift, but social conservatives still score wins

November 7, 2008

WASHINGTON (ABP)—All religious groups shifted toward Barack Obama, the candidate opposed by the Religious Right's leadership, in his historic presidential win. Still, religious conservatives managed a few victories.

The Democratic candidate garnered about 52 percent of the popular vote to GOP nominee John McCain's 46 percent. While McCain and running mate Sarah Palin—a favorite of the right—lost the night's biggest prize, four statewide ballot initiatives aimed at curtailing gay rights did manage passage. Other ballot initiatives watched closely by religious conservatives—like gambling and abortion rights—were a mixed bag.

Obama improved significantly on John Kerry's performance in 2004 in every major religious category, according to exit polls analyzed by the [Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life](#). Kerry lost white evangelicals by huge margins and Catholics by a narrower margin in losing to President Bush's re-election bid.

Obama did better than Kerry among evangelicals and won a majority of Catholics. He also scored increased support among Jews, Protestants in general and those not affiliated with any religion.

On state ballot initiatives, religious conservatives scored a big victory in California by passing Proposition 8, which repeals the marriage rights that the state's highest court authorized in May for same-sex couples.

Evangelicals, conservative Catholics and the Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints joined together to promote the measure.

Bans on same-sex marriage in Florida and Arizona—which defeated a similar state constitutional amendment two years ago—passed easily.

Nearly 57 percent of Arkansas voters approved a ban on unmarried couples serving as adoptive or foster parents. The measure bans both same-sex and opposite-sex cohabiting couples from caring for children, but opponents and some supporters said it was targeted at keeping gays from adopting. It came in response to a 2006 Arkansas Supreme Court decision striking down a ban on homosexual foster parents.

Anti-abortion forces didn't fare nearly as well as opponents of gay rights. Measures to outlaw or restrict abortion lost in California, Colorado and South Dakota. The measure in South Dakota would have been the nation's strictest abortion ban. It was similar to an abortion ban that state defeated by a similar margin in 2006.

Lottery or gambling-expansion measures passed in three of six states where they appeared on the ballot.

Washington state approved the nation's second assisted-suicide law, after Oregon.