

# **Presbyterians keep ban on noncelibate gay pastors: Closer vote this time**

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Though it was a closer vote this time, the regional bodies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) again declined to change the church's rule barring noncelibate gays and lesbians from being pastors.

On April 25, unofficial tallies showed that 88 presbyteries—one more than the simple majority needed—opposed a change, according to the Presbyterian News Service. By that date, 69 presbyteries, the church's regional bodies, had voted to remove the requirement that church officers live within a faithful heterosexual marriage or, if single, have no sexual relations.

The "fidelity and chastity" provision was added to the PCUSA constitution after the 1996 General Assembly. Two later proposals to delete it failed to win support from a majority of presbyteries. The vote was 57-114 after the 1997 assembly and 46-127 after the 2001 convention.

Terry Schlossberg, who coordinated the Presbyterian Coalition's campaign against the change, said, "Now it is time to live out the decision pastorally, leading people out of our society's sexual confusion."

More Light Presbyterians, a gay advocacy group, lamented the outcome and said that an affirmative vote "would have restored ordination standards based upon faith and character, not marital status and sexuality."