

New York State is sixth to legalize gay marriage

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"We have lifted the legal barriers that had segregated some loves to shadows," said Stephen H. Phelps, interim senior minister of Manhattan's Riverside Church. "Now the dignity of marriage is available to all," said Phelps, who was among clergy that urged passage of a bill making New York the most populous state of six to permit marriage to same-sex couples.

Crucial to the legislation's passage were detailed legal protections for religious organizations that refuse to marry gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender persons, said news reports. The bill was signed quickly by Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo before midnight June 24 after several days of negotiations among state senators. The law takes effect in late July.

Catholic bishops in the state, who fought the bill vigorously, said in a statement that while they treat with respect "our homosexual brothers and sisters," they affirmed their belief that marriage "is the joining of one man and one woman."

At St. Patrick's Cathedral, Archbishop Timothy Dolan told reporters on the following Sunday, which by chance was the annual Gay Pride Sunday nationwide, that he was "a little down, as you can imagine." Dolan admitted that he was "not surprised" at the outcome. Less resigned to the events, Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn urged in an op-ed column in the *New York Daily News* that his colleagues not give any state elected official any platform or honors "in all our parishes and churches for the foreseeable future."

New York joined Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont, as well as the District of Columbia, in providing full marriage equality to LGBT couples.

Nancy L. Wilson, moderator of the predominantly gay Metropolitan Community Churches, said in a statement that less than 5 percent of the population had such marriage rights before but that with New York's new law the figure more than

doubled to 11 percent. Wilson lauded the "activists, community organizations and progressive faith communities who made this moment possible."

Wilson, who is the successor to MCC founder Troy Perry, said the law that New Yorkers enacted gave "renewed momentum" to the marriage equality movement. At the same time, it is widely noted that 30 states have approved constitutional amendments against gay marriage.

Former National Football League linebacker Ken Hutcherson, an opponent of gay marriage and now pastor of Antioch Bible Church in Kirkland, Washington, told the *Christian Post* that same-sex marriage proponents "did a great job at putting pressure on legislators." But he said that six states and the District of Columbia changed the law through court or legislative actions—not by citizens voting in elections.

"Shame on the church," said Hutcherson, who heads a coalition of evangelical leaders such as James Dobson and Tony Perkins that defends the federal Defense of Marriage Act. "It is not that same-sex marriage is winning, it is that the church is retreating," he declared.