

Missouri prayer amendment passes by wide margin

by [Kellie Kotraba](#) in the [September 5, 2012](#) issue

Voters in Missouri have overwhelmingly approved a “right to pray” amendment to the state’s constitution, despite concerns about the measure’s necessity and legality. Amendment 2 received nearly 80 percent of the vote.

The language on the August 7 ballot stressed the rights of citizens to express their religious beliefs and the rights of children to pray and acknowledge God in schools.

State Rep. Mike McGhee, a Republican who sponsored the amendment, said it would remind people about their religious freedoms. “It’s OK to bring your Bible to study hall,” he said.

The measure also stated that students could be exempted from classroom activities that violate their religious beliefs. It was not clear how that exemption would be regulated. McGhee has said it could vary by age group.

The amendment was backed by Missouri’s four Catholic bishops and the state’s Southern Baptists. The Episcopal Diocese of Missouri and several non-Christian groups opposed it. Legal experts almost unanimously predict that the amendment will wind up in court.

Pediatrician Ellen Thomas, 48, said the amendment seemed like propaganda. “I really just think it’s designed to stir up angry sentiment,” she said, adding that “there’s no infringement on people’s right to pray as it is.”

Still, the amendment passed by a 7-1 margin. “I was glad to see it,” said Margie Cravens, 87, as she left her Columbia polling place. “And we need prayer now more than ever before.” —RNS