

# Kansas is 18th state to ban same-sex nuptials: Constitutional amendment approved by voters

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Kansas voters have made that state the 18th in the nation to adopt a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage. They approved on April 5 an amendment to the Kansas constitution banning gay marriage by a 70 percent margin.

Seventeen other states already have bans on gay marriage in their constitutions, 13 of which were 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 extending either civil-union or partner 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 that 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 makes 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.” Added Joe Solmonese, president of the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign: “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. *-Associated Baptist Press*