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Maryland referendum on illegal immigration makes strange bedfellows

Pat Perriello | Jul. 26, 2012 NCR Today

The 2012 election cycle in Maryland will be the year of the referenda. The state could be becoming the California of the East Coast with all the measures that are heading for referendum in November. Petitions have resulted in the need for Marylanders to vote on same-sex marriage, the Maryland DREAM Act, which grants in-state tuition for some illegal immigrants, and the new redistricting map for Maryland. Additionally, there is the possibility that a special legislative session could result in a vote to increase and enhance gambling venues in the state.

The Catholic church has left no stone unturned in fighting against the same-sex marriage law. Tables were set up in many churches asking parishioners to sign the petition to bring the measure to referendum. Yet in last week's *Baltimore Sun*, there was an article [1] and picture (in some editions) of Baltimore Auxiliary Bishop Denis Madden standing next to gay-rights advocates to help form a coalition of churches and community organizations supporting the approval of the DREAM Act legislation. In fact, it was representatives of Equality Maryland, the organization promoting the same-sex marriage legislation, that were represented at this event.

It is heartening to see all sides come together to support important opportunities for these young people who entered this country illegally through no fault of their own. These students are expected to meet a number of specific requirements to be eligible for in-state tuition, including first attending a local community college for two years. This act does, however, allow these talented young people to continue to contribute to the future and to the economy of our state.

Hopefully the church will work as energetically and determinedly for this DREAM Act legislation as it has worked to undermine the same-sex marriage law. One can hope that by working together with groups like Equality Maryland, both sides will grow in understanding and acceptance of the other.

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Links:
[1] http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/bs-md-dream-act-umbc-20120718,0,5240640.story