

## **Bishops call lack of Illinois vote on same-sex marriage a victory**

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Washington

The failure of members of the Illinois House to vote on a bill legalizing same-sex marriage before the legislative session ended shows that "marriage redefinition -- even in the face of intense political pressure -- is not inevitable," said Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco.

It "reflects a failure to have the votes to pass the bill," said the archbishop, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage. He called it a "victory in the Land of Lincoln."

He made the comments in a statement released Monday in Washington.

The Illinois legislative session ended the evening of May 31 before House members brought to a vote a measure passed by the state Senate in February. The bill changes the definition of marriage in state law from "between a man and a woman" to "between two persons."

"All persons have inherent dignity and must be treated equally with the respect and justice that is their due," Cordileone said. "That is part of the purpose of the law; it is not the purpose of the law, though, to give people social status, as the advocates for marriage redefinition contend."

He said a diverse group of faith leaders opposed to the marriage bill "spoke eloquently on the reality that nature and nature's God make clear that marriage is the union of one man and one woman."

An official with a gay rights group criticized House members for failing to bring the measure to a vote, saying it was unacceptable for constituents not to know how their state representatives stood on the issue. Jim Bennett, of Lambda Legal, criticized the state - which he called "one of the bluest of the blue" in the Midwest -- for not following Iowa and Minnesota in legalizing same-sex marriage.

In May, Minnesota lawmakers voted to allow same-sex couples to marry, making it the 12th state to do so. Same-sex marriage became legal in Iowa following a decision of the Iowa Supreme Court in April 2009. Illinois would have become the 13th state to legalize same-sex marriages.

In opposing the measure in Illinois, the state's Catholic conference, the public policy arm of the bishops, said early on that it offered "murky religious freedom protections, at best."

In reaction to the House being unable to bring the bill to a vote, the conference said the Catholic bishops were grateful that lawmakers "listened to their constituents and declined to consider legislation that would redefine marriage in Illinois."

Since January 2011, Illinois has recognized civil unions for same-sex couples, giving them the rights of marriage under state law. That law and subsequent court rulings forced Catholic Charities agencies throughout Illinois out of adoption and foster care.

At issue was the agencies' long-standing refusal to violate church teaching and place children with same-sex or unmarried heterosexual couples and instead refer such cases to other agencies or the Department of Children and Family Services. The state interpreted the policy as discriminatory to same-sex couples under the new Illinois Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act.

When the Catholic agencies ended their foster care and adoption services, the state's bishops noted that before that, the Catholic church had successfully partnered with Illinois for 50 years in providing such services.

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