

May 2009

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## A Valley of Decision

*The result of our spiritual bankruptcy has us retreating in appeasement and humiliation when issues of righteousness come up in public debate.* --Rev. Alec Rowlands, Senior Pastor, Westgate Chapel

The latest installment of homosexual benefits that appears to codify homosexual “marriage” in Washington State was signed into law by Gov. Gregoire on May 18. The 110-page benefits package outlined in SB 5688, invokes some 180 times, the mantra “*Marriage shall apply equally to state registered domestic partnerships.*” Unless contested by four percent of registered voters in the next 60 days, the new marriage law will take effect July 25.

A coalition of family organizations has filed *Referendum 71* intending to stand down this latest assault on societal norms. Generally, a referendum refers a law passed by the Legislature to a vote of the people. To qualify for the November ballot, it requires the approval of legal voters equal to four percent of the number of votes cast for the office of Governor at the last regular gubernatorial election—meaning 120,577 signatures.

A similar scenario existed in 2006 when the most radical law ever enacted in Washington State added the all-inclusive term “sexual orientation” to the state’s civil rights code. It set in place, the legal framework for the systematic demolition of marriage. When conservatives quickly filed a referendum (R-65) requiring 112,440 signatures to refer that law to a vote of the people, most observers, pro and con, assumed the effort would succeed. Shockingly, it fell some 1500 signatures wide of the mark.

A popular radio show host confessed he was blown away by the referendum’s failure to get enough qualifying signatures, noting that only four voters per 100 needed to “show up.”

Indeed, it was believed at the time that at least one in every 25 voters probably considered the new “sexual orientation” law offensive, unnecessary and morally reprehensible. Organizers had also figured that at least ten percent of nearly 5,400 churches identified would readily agree that codifying sexual perversion is a moral issue requiring a requisite, unambiguous stand. Had that been the case, some 500 churches producing only 225 signatures each would have easily purchased R-65 a place on the November ballot.

At the beginning of the campaign in February 2006, the Christian Coalition advised church leaders that a successful challenge to the “sexual orientation” law would require considerably more than passing a petition around on Sunday morning and dropping it in the mail on Monday. Pastors were urged to send petitions home with each family to insure a sizeable tally. Calvary (Chapel) fellowships across the state performed commendably. With few exceptions, they were in a class by themselves.

In June 2006, following the unthinkable collapse of R-65, we surveyed dozens of key activists around the state to get a sense of what went wrong. The most frequently mentioned (perceived) impediment was the closed door. The Church door. Following are general observations from volunteers—excerpted from our June 2006 report:

“FIRST—the Church is not as well informed on current issues as presumed. Although the gate keepers (pastors) of most small to medium size churches seemed up to speed on the R-65 issue, their colleagues in many of the larger churches were not. After the campaign, a pastor of a [certain] mega-church admitted he had never heard of the new “sexual orientation” law or R-65.

SECOND—some gate keepers sent a mixed message. A church of 4,000 took a modest stand on R-65. The bulletin mentioned an R-65 information table in the foyer. However, a volunteer was only permitted to collect names and addresses of those seeking information. No petitions could be displayed. Petitions and “talking points” were mailed from the volunteer’s home at her own expense.

THIRD—many leaders, including the state’s Catholic bishops [were] under the notion that R-65 was about taking rights from certain groups of people. In a letter issued in May, the bishops said, “We are concerned that the signature-gathering campaign for Referendum 65 may have the effect of encouraging unjust discrimination against homosexual persons.”

Following the R-65 campaign, Dr. Alec Rowlands, senior pastor at Westgate Chapel in Edmonds and President of *Sound the Alarm*, commented on three attitudes the Church battles in this state:

1. Apathy: The Church has operated so long asleep in the light that when issues of moral urgency arise we are not stirred to prayer or action.
2. Pride and Self Sufficiency: We have underestimated the enemy and by this I do not mean the homosexual community or liberal politicians. I am referring to the enemy of our souls.
3. Intimidation: The result of our spiritual bankruptcy has us retreating in appeasement and humiliation when issues of righteousness come up in public debate.”

At this point, not all family-values groups that coalesced to defend marriage in 2006 are necessarily onboard with the new *Referendum 71* effort. A certain few predict a train wreck in November even if 120,577 signatures can somehow be collected in the next 60 days. Here are a few email comments we’ve seen; some favoring immediate action and some quite hesitant:

**Favorable**: “A Referendum to roll back SB 5688 (which grants full spousal rights for homosexual couples in everything but the name) will keep the law from going into effect and put the measure in front of the voters in November.”(LS) **Hesitant**: “Given the public’s current apathy toward this issue, and the money necessary to gain their attention, a loss at the ballot box would accelerate public perception that it’s not an important issue.”(DK)

**Favorable**: “We don’t know what is going to happen in the next year, but I presume that the homosexual lobby is only going to get stronger and bolder...With fear and trembling, I will join the referendum team and seek to point them to the Lord at every turn.”(HL) **Hesitant**: “Voters are immune...to the word ‘gay marriage’ right now. Besides, they think we hate them.”(JW)

**Favorable**: “I don’t like this issue, I don’t want to fight on this issue, but still I think we may need to fight and raise the banner as a witness.”(FB) **Hesitant**: “I am concerned as to whether most Christians are really concerned enough about public policy social issues to really get out and work that hard on making it succeed.”(WL)

**Favorable**: “Of course, we should push ahead with all our strength.”(PB) **Hesitant**: “Prop 8 in California was sizably funded by the Mormon Church (they are now under huge attack for it).”(CZ)

We highly value the views of our colleagues; those who are fully committed to *R-71* as well as those who are hesitant at this point. Their “mettle” has been well tested in many campaigns. But we do believe our readers should sit down with their pastors and pose at least two questions:

1. Do you know about the current efforts to roll back *homosexual marriage* in this state?
2. Now that you know, what are your plans?

We will anxiously await your reports.

*Rick Forcier*