

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 8, 2005

SENATE ADVANCES AMENDMENT ON MARRIAGE

By a vote of 19-14, the State Senate has approved a joint resolution to amend Wisconsin's constitution to define marriage as a union between one man and one woman. The proposal, Senate Joint Resolution 53 now goes to the Assembly.

The process for amending the state constitution provides that two successive legislatures must approve an identical resolution. The proposed amendment is then submitted to the voters for their approval in a general election. The 2003-2004 legislature approved the amendment the first time last year. If the Assembly, as expected, follows the Senate's lead, the issue will be on ballot in November of 2006.

The proposed ballot question reads as follows:

Shall section 13 of article XIII of the constitution be created to provide that only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in this state and that a legal status identical or substantially similar to that of marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized in this state?

Over the past several years, nearly 20 states have amended their constitutions to define marriage as a union between a man and woman, most by referendum. Public opinion polls show strong support for the amendment in Wisconsin.

Much of the senate debate centered on whether the proposed amendment is necessary. Proponents of the resolution, led by Sen. Scott Fitzgerald of Juneau, said the amendment is needed to preclude judges from ruling that Wisconsin must recognize same sex unions that are valid in other states. Opponents of the amendment argued that state law already prevents same-sex marriage and that the proposed language could prohibit benefits to persons in "domestic partnership arrangements" that some communities and employers currently recognize.

The WCC supports the proposed amendment and offered testimony on its behalf in 2004 and again this year. WCC Executive Director John Huebscher predicted that the voters would ratify the amendment when it is placed on the ballot next year.

Contact: John Huebscher at 608/257-0004.

131 W. Wilson St., Suite 1105
Madison, WI 53703
608/257-0004
www.wisconsincatholic.org