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Virginians to vote on same-sex marriage

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Capital News Service

Virginians will go to the polls in November to decide whether to amend the state Constitution to outlaw gay marriage and civil unions in the commonwealth.

In late January, the Senate joined the House in approving the proposed constitutional amendment and legislation to hold a statewide referendum at the general election on Tuesday, Nov. 9. The Senate voted 28-11 in favor of the constitutional amendment (Senate Joint Resolution 92) and accompanying legislation to conduct the referendum (Senate Bill 526). The vote was along party lines: All 28 Republican senators voted for SJR 92 and SB 526. Of the Democratic senators, five voted for the proposals and 11 against.

For & Against

Sen. Stephen D. Newman, R-Forest, sponsored both pieces of legislation. He encouraged his colleagues to approve the constitutional amendment and ensure that the term "marriage" could apply only to one man and one woman in Virginia. "Other relationships, while they may bring value, are not equal to marriage. Marriage by any other name still is not marriage," Newman said. "And when the federal courts come looking to overturn Virginia's current statute, the great state of Virginia and its people will have elevated the resolution to the highest possible place: Virginia's Constitution."

Sen. John S. Edwards, D-Roanoke, argued that same-sex marriages are already prohibited in Virginia. He said a 1998 law keeps Virginia from having to recognize such marriages from other states. "Virginia's code provides that marriage is between one man and one woman," Edwards said. "That's not going to change whether we pass this constitutional amendment or not." Edwards also said he did not think the amendment would change the definition of



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How They Voted?

On Jan. 25, the Senate passed both the constitutional amendment (SJ 92) and the referendum bill (SB 526) on identical votes of 28-11. On Jan. 24, the Senate voted 13-26 against a proposal by Sen. John Edwards to delete from the constitutional amendment a section that he said would affect contracts between same-sex couples.

Senator	SJ 92 / SB 526	Edwards' amendment to SJ 92
J. Brandon Bell, R-Roanoke	Yes	No
Harry B. Blevins, R-Chesapeake	Yes	No
John H. Chichester, R-Fredericksburg	Yes	No
Charles J. Colgan, D-Manassas	Yes	No
Ken Cuccinelli, R-Centreville	Yes	No
R. Creigh Deeds, D-Charlottesville	Yes	Yes
Jeannemarie Devolites Davis, R-Vienna	Yes	No
John S. Edwards, D-Roanoke	No	Yes
Emmett W. Hanger, R-Mount Solon	Yes	No
Charles R. Hawkins, R-Chatham	Yes	No