



## PRESS RELEASE

16 West 22<sup>nd</sup> Street New York, NY 10010 (212) 627-0305 (212) 627-4136

Press Contacts: Joe Tarver (212) 627-0305 / (917) 604-7509 (cell)

## Support Grows in New York for Right of Gay People to Marry

### Three-Year Trend Shows Growing Majority of New Yorkers Support Ending Discrimination in Marriage

New York City, April 10, 2006 – Support in New York has steadily grown over the last three years for the right of gay people to marry, according to a poll released today by Empire State Pride Agenda (Pride Agenda), the state's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization.

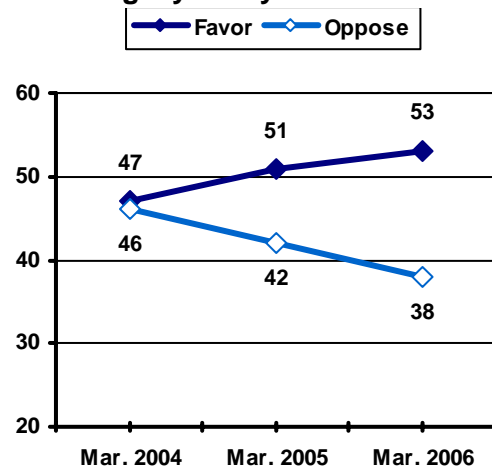
Conducted by Global Strategy Group in March, the poll found that 53% of New Yorkers support marriage for same-sex couples while 38% do not. These numbers and those from two other polls conducted for the Pride Agenda by Global Strategy Group in 2004 and 2005 track a steady increase in support among New Yorkers on this issue. What was an almost even split in opinion two years ago has now become a 15 point margin in favor of marriage for same-sex couples. (In 2004, the split was 47 for, 46 against.)

Pride Agenda Executive Director Alan Van Capelle said, “A growing majority of New Yorkers support ending discrimination in marriage. There is a clear trend of support moving in our direction and we are very encouraged by these findings.”

Results show rising support and falling opposition to marriage for same-sex couples and are consistent with findings from three other polls released around the country in recent weeks. A national poll by the Pew Research Center, a Zogby poll for Garden State Equality in the neighboring state of New Jersey, and a nonpartisan Field Poll in California all show the same trend.

“New Yorkers have been thinking through this issue for three years now,” said Van Capelle. “They’ve seen our families; they know we’re in loving, committed relationships and that many of us are raising children. They’ve heard how our families are harmed by the discriminatory denial of marriage and they’re moving to support us.”

**Allowing Same-Sex Couples to Legally Marry in New York**

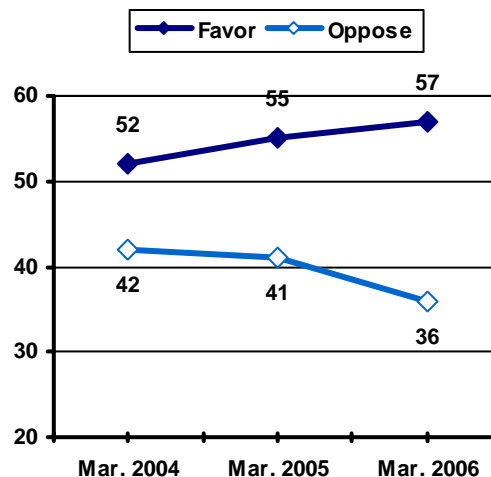


On respecting out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples as legal marriages in New York, support again continued to increase. The 10 point margin that existed in 2004 on this question (52% for, 42% against) has now widened to 21 points (57% for, 36% against).

The poll asked likely voters about their reaction to their state senator or assemblymember taking a position in support of marriage for same-sex couples, in support of civil unions/domestic partnerships, and in opposition to marriage for same-sex couples.

The data indicated there was almost no political harm to an elected official voting to support marriage for same-sex couples (42% said it would make no make difference, 26% were more likely to support). The same holds true for the other two mechanisms – civil unions and domestic partnerships -- that provide lesser protections for LGBT families. Respondents did, however, look much less favorably on elected officials who vote for legislation to discriminate against same-sex couples by denying them the right to marry (45% were less likely to support, 21% more likely to support, 30% did not make a difference).

**Respecting Out-of-State Marriages of Same-Sex Couples as Legal Marriages in New York**



“Many of our elected officials have stated their support for our right to marry,” said Van Capelle. “They’re standing with us and for that we are grateful. We hope others who are still thinking about this issue will decide it’s time to join them.”

“These findings show steady and regular improvement each year in the climate around marriage for same-sex couples in New York,” continued Van Capelle. “New Yorkers in larger and larger numbers are agreeing that the harmful effects of denying marriage to our families must end.”

Results were drawn from 658 random digit dialed telephone interviews in March of likely voters across New York State. The margin of error for the overall sample is +/-3.8%.

### Poll Highlights

- **Marriage:** 53% support marriage for same-sex couples and 38% oppose.
- **Civil Unions and domestic partnerships:** 72% support allowing same-sex couples to form civil unions or domestic partnerships and 22% oppose.
- **New York Legislature passing a “Defense of Marriage Act” to bar marriage between same-sex couples:** 50% oppose and 43% support
- **New York respecting out-of-state marriages between same-sex couples:** 57% support and 36% oppose

- **Support for state senator or assemblymember voting to allow same-sex couple to marry:** 26% more likely to support, 42% makes no difference.
- **Support for state senator or assemblymember voting to allow same-sex couples to form civil unions or domestic partnerships:** 35% more likely to support, 39% makes no difference.
- **Support for state senator or assemblymember voting to discriminate against same-sex couples by denying them the right to marry:** 45% less likely to support, 30% makes no difference.
- **Courts or legislature should having authority to decide questions about same-sex marriage:** 47% say courts and 40% say legislature

**Poll findings along with demographic data on respondents can be viewed on the Pride Agenda's homepage at [www.prideagenda.org](http://www.prideagenda.org) and downloaded in PDF format.**

Results for 2005 can be viewed at <http://www.prideagenda.org/pressreleases/pr-04-06-05.html>; results for 2004 at <http://www.prideagenda.org/pressreleases/pr-04-19-04.html>.

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*Founded in 1990, the Empire State Pride Agenda is New York's statewide civil rights organization committed to achieving full equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) New Yorkers and our families. The Pride Agenda fights for these objectives by: educating the public, elected officials and policymakers; building coalitions and mobilizing allies; and, organizing and empowering the LGBT community. Victories include the enactment of statewide sexual orientation non-discrimination and hate crimes laws, the repeal of the consensual sodomy statute, and winning over \$18 million in state funds for LGBT health and human services statewide. Other victories include the passage of local non-discrimination measures in Westchester County, Nassau County, Suffolk County, and Buffalo; the enactment of domestic partner, transgender non-discrimination laws in NYC; and, the enactment of a series of state laws, regulations, and private relief initiatives that provided equal support to LGBT surviving partners of 9/11 victims. With thousands of supporters, the Pride Agenda has offices in NYC and Albany and is the largest statewide LGBT organization in the country.*