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Liberal activists hail referendum votes on abortion, gays

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By Cheryl Wetzstein

Democratic social values prevailed in many state elections, as voters rejected pro-life measures on abortion, passed a measure supporting embryonic stem-cell research and, for the first time, defeated a measure to restrict marriage to one man-one woman unions.

"Women voters cleaned house. Women are fed up" with Iraq policy, the "so-called economic recovery" and the "relentless efforts to limit women's reproductive rights," the liberal National Organization for Women said.

"American voters sent a clear message yesterday that the era of gay-bashing to win elections is over, as voters flatly rejected anti-gay and divisive candidates," said Joe Solmonese, president of Human Rights Campaign, which spent \$5 million on election-related activities.

The elections show "that supporting fairness for gay and lesbian families is not a liability, while aligning with the extreme Christian right is," said the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), which is meeting this week with 2,000 homosexual rights activists in Kansas City, Mo., to review the elections and plan strategies.

Referring to the defeat of Arizona's Proposition 107, which would have defined marriage as only the union of one man and one woman, NGLTF leader Matt Foreman said the marriage issue "just doesn't have the juice it had just two years ago."

"People are getting sick of it," he said.

Tuesday wasn't a full sweep for liberal social issues -- measures to legalize marijuana failed in three states, a well-funded Colorado measure to create a domestic-partner system didn't survive and seven state marriage amendments passed.

Still, the results were sobering to leaders of social conservatives.

"The values voters of 2004 could be called the integrity voters of 2006," Family Research Council President Tony Perkins said. "The message is that values are not just something you talk about at election time. Values should guide public policies and personal conduct. This should be a clear message to both parties that values voters vote values, not party.

"That revelation may be an inescapable reality for Republicans, but it should serve as a warning to the many Democrats who leveraged the values gap by running as pro-life, pro-family candidates," Mr. Perkins added. "Those integrity voters will be back at the polls in two short years."

Among the Democrat victories were passage of a Missouri measure to allow embryonic stem-cell research and defeats of "parent notification" abortion measures in California and Oregon and a ban on abortions in South Dakota. In Kansas, voters also failed to re-elect Attorney General Phill Kline, who has been in a court battle to obtain 90 abortion records as evidence of illegal late-term

abortions, child rape and other crimes. Democrat Paul Morrison said Tuesday he will look at Mr. Kline's evidence, but he is expected to drop the case.

Democrats lost measures to legalize marijuana in Nevada, South Dakota and Colorado, and lost marriage amendment battles in Colorado, Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin.