

## Texans could play big role in California amendment battle

By David Webb  
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Both pro- and anti-gay-marriage supporters likely to turn to the Lone Star State for help in funding campaigns

Texas residents need to get ready for a bitter, expensive fight — even though it's occurring several states away, according to the state's LGBT activists.

The expected ballot referendum in California in November to determine if the state Supreme Court's recent decision legalizing same-sex marriage will be invalidated will affect Texas and every other state, said Paul Scott, executive director of Equality Texas.

If same-sex marriage remains legal in California, it could lead to more tolerance toward LGBT issues in Texas and other conservative states while outlawing it would have the opposite effect, he said.

"If we are able to secure marriage equality in California, that really is a significant advancement in the LGBT movement," Scott said. "It anchors us on the other coast across from Massachusetts in regard to marriage equality."

The battle is expected to cost millions, and national groups such as the Human Rights Campaign, **The National Center for Lesbian Rights and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force are already seeking contributions to the cause.** Texas' LGBT community is known to be wealthy and politically involved, so significant contributions to the war chest are expected to flow from the state.

"There's going to be a national initiative to get support to get boots on the ground as well as financial support," Scott said.

The Human Rights Campaign announced a \$500,000 pledge for the California initiative this week.

Simultaneously, the Family Research Council and other anti-gay groups are soliciting funds to help pass the anti-gay ballot measure.

Mathew D. Staver, the chairman of the conservative Florida-based Liberty Counsel, told the New York Times that he flew to Dallas within hours after the California Supreme Court decision to meet with a fundraiser to plan strategy. He did not return a message left by the Dallas Voice about his meeting, and he apparently has not revealed the name of the individual with whom he met to the media.

But Cathie Adams, executive director of the Texas Eagle Forum, said that aside from the moral support of a shared conservative philosophy, her group would not be involved in the California fight. She denied knowing whom Staver might have asked for financial help.

"We have a California chairman who will be dealing with that," Adams said. "I don't stick my nose in some other state's business."

Adams rejects Scott's contention that a LGBT win in California would have any impact in Texas.

"I don't think much has changed," Adams said. "We'll just wait and see."

The Human Rights Campaign Dallas-Fort Worth steering committee is scheduled to meet this week to discuss how lend help in battling the California initiative, according to Jeff Strater, a spokesman for the committee. The upcoming fight in California illustrates why it is so important to raise money all year long for the national organization's efforts to promote LGBT rights, he said.

"Money raised from HRC members will help the organization quickly mobilize and organize both staff and volunteers to support activists in California," Strater said. "Having cash on hand allows HRC staff and volunteer leaders to use best practices and the latest technology to protect and achieve LGBT equality."

Although California's conservative groups will undoubtedly receive contributions from Texas, widespread financial support that would overpower LGBT forces seems unlikely, Scott said. Houston homebuilder Bob Perry bankrolled the Proposition 2 effort in 2006, even though countless numbers of gay and lesbian homebuyers had unwittingly purchased new residences from him over the years.

"I suspect there might be some calculated analysis of whether or not it's worth the investment," Scott said.

The ballot battle in California will be a much different one from what activists fought and lost in Texas, Scott said.

"It's a much more favorable environment for the amendment to be defeated if it does get on the ballot," Scott said. "Polling data definitely shows it's going to be a much closer fight."