

## **NGLTF Analysis of Race and Prop 8 Vote Stirs Controversy**

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An analysis of the Proposition 8 vote released Jan. 6 by the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute** said the driving forces behind the California marriage ban's passage were Republican party affiliation, conservative political ideology, frequent church attendance and old age. But, in its primary focus, the study claimed to "debunk" exit polling that found that 70 percent of black people voted for Proposition 8, saying that the real number was around 58 percent.

The report said 81 percent of Republicans voted for Prop 8, along with 82 percent of conservatives, 70 percent of weekly churchgoers and 67 percent of people over age 65. The analysis concluded that blacks' heightened religiosity rather than their race per se explained their elevated voting for Prop 8.

The research, by New York University professor Patrick J. Egan and Hunter College professor Kenneth Sherrill, looked at pre- and post-election polls and precinct-level voting data from five California counties with the highest number of black voters.

In an article posted Jan. 7 at the Web site Box Turtle Bulletin, writer Timothy Kincaid said some of the numbers and methodology of NGLTF's report did not make sense to him, and he accused the organization of being "more of an agent of spin than an advocate for honesty." See [tinyurl.com/btb-nlgtf](http://tinyurl.com/btb-nlgtf). But Matt Foreman of the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, which paid for the study, called Kincaid's article "an unbelievably shoddy job of analyzing the report."

In a comment posted at the site, Foreman said: "The statistical facts speak for themselves: when 'religiosity' (meaning attending worship at least once a week or more) [is taken into account], African Americans were not statistically different from anyone else. White people who attend church at least once a week voted in even higher numbers for Prop 8. The distinction is that African Americans attend worship much more frequently than other people. The fact that so many people automatically defaulted to race is shocking and appalling."

The report did not explain why it is meaningful to distinguish between a race-based voting pattern and a voting pattern tied to race-based religious habits, though Foreman's comments on the Web site and elsewhere indicate he believes it is improper to cite a race-based voting pattern by itself (i.e., blacks voted for Prop 8 at a level higher than other racial groups did) if the pattern can be explained by race-based religious habits (i.e., blacks voted for Prop 8 at a level higher than other racial groups did because they go to church more often).

Paradoxically, the NGLTF study found that among weekly churchgoers, the percentage of blacks who voted for Prop 8 (66 percent) was actually lower than for whites (70 percent), Latinos (74

percent) or Asians (68 percent). But the authors said these differences were not statistically significant.

The study also found that blacks who do not attend church weekly voted for Prop 8 at a substantially higher level than whites and Asians who do not attend church weekly. Specifically, among voters who do not attend services weekly, the report found that 48 percent of blacks voted for Prop 8 compared with 46 percent of Latinos, 36 percent of whites and 33 percent of Asians. The authors said these differences also were not statistically significant.

Prop 8, which amended the state constitution to re-ban same-sex marriage, passed with 52.3 percent of the vote on Nov. 4. It is being challenged in the state Supreme Court as unconstitutional, with a ruling expected in June.