

Total same-sex marriage referendum signatures top 162,000

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The Maryland Marriage Alliance announced today that it plans to submit an additional 39, 743 signatures to the Maryland State Board of Elections as part of efforts to add a referendum on the state's same sex marriage law to the November ballot.

The addition brings the total of signatures supporting the referendum to 162, 224. The Maryland Marriage Alliance submitted more than 122, 000 signatures to Maryland's Secretary of State May 29, more than double the nearly 57, 000 signatures required to add a referendum.

One-third of the required signatures were due by the end of May. All signatures were due by June 30.

A partner of the Maryland Marriage Alliance, the Maryland Catholic Conference called the outcome "a phenomenal response." The MCC worked with Catholic parishes and organizations, including the Knights of Columbus, to collect signatures through parish-based petition drives.

The MCC trained volunteers to ensure collected signatures were valid and would withstand the strict scrutiny expected from the Board of Elections. According to the MCC, the Board of Elections has already validated more than 109,000 signatures.

"The everyday people of Maryland have shown unprecedented support in this petition process, and we will carry that enthusiasm forward to the November elections with thoughtfulness and compassion," the MCC executive director Mary Ellen Russell said in a June 25 statement.

"We are Democrats, Independents and Republicans, spanning generations from

every corner of the state, and represent many faiths and no faith," she said.

Maryland's General Assembly passed legislation legalizing same-sex marriage in February, and Governor Martin J. O'Malley signed the measure into law March 1. The law is scheduled to take effect in 2013.

In response to the Maryland Marriage Alliance's final signature submission, Josh Levin, campaign manager for Marylanders for Marriage Equality, which supports the same-sex marriage law, said in a statement that his coalition is "focused on building a smart, strategic campaign to amplify and mobilize the 57 percent of Maryland voters who support the same-sex marriage law."

Levin drew his statistic from a Public Policy Poll in May, which found that 57 percent of Maryland voters would vote in favor of same-sex marriage if it were on the November ballot. Russell said at the time she did not believe the majority of Marylanders actually support the same-sex marriage law.

A June 25 statement from Derek McCoy, chairman of the Maryland Marriage Alliance, affirmed that position.

"In spite of what our opponents will say, these incredible numbers clearly show that Marylanders strongly reject the idea of redefining marriage," he said.

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