

NC poll: Majority opposes same-sex marriage ban

By Emery P. Dalesio, Associated Press
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RALEIGH -- A majority of North Carolina residents say they oppose a state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, a result unchanged since before the General Assembly voted to place the issue before voters in May, a poll released Friday said.

A statewide Elon University poll found 56 percent of respondents oppose changing the state constitution to permanently bar same-sex couples from marriage rights, the same result as an Elon poll in February. The General Assembly voted two weeks ago to let voters decide the constitutional amendment.

The survey doesn't suggest whether the constitutional amendment will pass or fail when voters decide in May because the Elon poll doesn't survey eligible or likely voters.

"This is a nice snapshot of what the general public thinks, but when it comes time for voting this issue is kind of up for grabs," said Mileah Kromer, the poll's assistant director and an Elon political science professor. "We do see a majority of citizens opposing it, but are these the same citizens that will be compelled to care enough to go and vote in May?"

Republican voters traditionally show high levels of support for same-sex marriage bans, and May's ballot will feature high-profile GOP races selecting the party's candidates for president and governor, Kromer said. The draw for Republicans may diminish if the party's presidential nominee is effectively decided by the time North Carolina GOP voters get their chance late in the nominating process, she said.

The poll found more than half of North Carolina residents continue to support some legal recognition of same-sex couples, with more than one-quarter believing they should have full marriage rights.

The survey found that 29 percent of respondents in the state support civil unions or partnerships for gay couples but not full marriage rights. About 33 percent of people support full marriage rights, up from 28 percent when Elon pollsters asked the question in February.

Meanwhile, 34 percent of respondents opposed all legal recognition for same-sex partners, down from 44 percent when the question was asked two years ago.

The Elon poll was conducted between Sunday and Thursday and surveyed 594 North Carolina adults. It has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Emery Dalesio can be reached at <http://twitter.com/emerydalesio>

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