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Civil Unions Bill Passes House

Measure Revived On Final Day Of Legislature

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HONOLULU -- Opponents of a civil unions bill are urging Gov. Linda Lingle to veto the measure when it hits her desk.

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"I'm extremely extremely disappointed in our representatives, How can they do this on the last day? It seems very sneaky. I'm very disappointed with our government," said Lisa Cockett.

The House passed a bill on Thursday evening that would give same-sex couples and unmarried heterosexual couples rights similar to married couples.

Rep. Blake Oshiro called for House Bill 444 to be discussed in the afternoon on the final day of the session.

Supporters of the bill applauded the move.

"It is a great day for Hawaii. The legislators from the house came through. They showed great courage and leadership today. They did not bow to the fear tactics of our opponents," said Alan Spector of the Family Equality Coalition.

The House Gallery was filled with supporters and opponents of the measure.

Lawmakers against the legislation had argued against the vote.

"This is going to cause chaos in the community this is not what legislators do on the last day before they die, in the last hour. This is untimely. This is not fair and I think this is not a wise move," said Representative Gene Ward.

The measure passed 31-20. ([See how each representative voted.](#))

In January, House members voted to shelve the measure after House Speaker Calvin Say said it was apparent that there was not a veto-proof majority of votes.

The bill now goes to Lingle for signing or veto. The governor expects to hear from both sides of the issue in the next 45 days before she decides whether she will veto civil unions. She could do nothing and allow the bill to become law, sign the bill into law or veto it.

"I would just strongly encourage her to take a serious look at the bill and realize that it's not about marriage it's about just equal treatment under the law," said Oshiro."

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Hawaii Family Forum's Dennis Arakaki, a former legislator, hopes opponents will reignite their effort and convince the governor to veto.

"Even though we had a strong start, we sort of faltered at the end and I think it showed," Arakaki said.

Arakaki said civil union opponents are concerned because courts have granted same-sex marriage in states where civil unions are legal.

"If the Legislature wanted to establish the equivalent of same-sex marriage, they should have put it on the ballot for the people to decide. This bill should not be allowed to become law," Lt. Gov. James "Duke" Aiona said in a written statement.

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