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Hawaii Legislature OKs historic civil unions bill; governor now must decide

Advertiser Staff

By a vote of 31-20, the Hawaii House today approved a civil unions bill just hours before the end of this year's legislative session.

The measure would give unmarried same-sex and heterosexual couples the same rights as married couples under state law. The bill passed the Senate in January by a vote of 18-7 and now goes to the governor for her consideration.

Gov. Linda Lingle had urged lawmakers against taking up civil unions this session and to instead focus on the state's budget deficit. She has not said whether she would sign or veto the bill.

Lingle has 45 days to decide. If she vetoes the bill, the House and Senate can come back in a one-day override session in July.

The vote in the Senate was enough to override a veto, but the vote in the House was not. The House would need 34 votes to override.

The bill's passage was considered a major leap toward expanding the rights of gay couples in Hawai'i. It was here that national debate on the issue erupted in 1993 in the wake of a historic Hawai'i Supreme Court ruling.

HB 444 was revived on the last day of the legislative session on a motion by House Majority Leader Blake Oshiro.

State House leaders had indefinitely postponed action on the bill in January, and a series of four

votes was needed today to suspend legislative rules, bring the measure back for a vote, approve amendments to the bill, and then vote on the bill itself.

Oshiro, D-33rd (Aiea, Halawa Valley, Aiea Heights) had said previously that he would not make the motion to revive civil unions, but he changed his mind.

Before the final vote, Rep. Gene Ward reminded fellow lawmakers that the people spoke in a 1998 constitutional amendment that gave lawmakers the right to define marriage as between a man and a woman. That measure passed with 70 percent approval from voters.

Oshiro thanked his colleagues for taking a vote, saying it reaffirmed his belief in the House.

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Kat Brady, of Liliha, and Henry Cheng and Vincent Rosa of Pearl City celebrated the passing of the civil unions bill this afternoon by the Legislature.

NORMAN SHAPIRO | The Honolulu Advertiser

HOW THEY VOTED

Here's how members of the state House voted today on HB444, the civil unions bill:

Yes: (31)

Della Au Belatti

Lyla Berg

Joe Bertram

Tom Brower

Rida Cabanilla

Mele Carroll

Pono Chong

Denny Coffman

Faye Hanohano

Robert Herkes

Jon Riki Karamatsu

Gilbert Keith-Agaran

Chris Lee

Marilyn Lee

Sylvia Luke

Barbara Marumoto

Angus McKelvey

Hermina Morita

Mark Nakashima

Scott Nishimoto

Blake Oshiro

Marcus Oshiro

Karl Rhoads

Scott Saiki

Calvin Say

Maile Shimabukuro

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Roy Takumi

Ryan Yamane

Cynthia Thielen

Glenn Wakai

Jessica Wooley

Kyle Yamashita

No: (20)

Henry Aquino

Karen Awana

Jerry Chang

Corinne Ching

Isaac Choy

Cindy Evans

Lynn Finnegan

Sharon Har

Ken Ito

Michael Magaoay

Joey Manahan

John Mizuno

Kymberly Pine

Roland Sagum

Joe Souki

K. Mark Takai

James Tokioka

Clift Tsuji

Gene Ward



Civil unions supporters sat among the gallery on the last day of session today.

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The smartphone screen shows a travel itinerary for 'USA TODAY Meeting' on 'SEP 27, 2010', listing flights to MDL, Washington (DAD), and a gallery in Washington.

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