

MASSACHUSETTS

The Massachusetts Constitutional Convention forwarded March 29 to the 2005-2006 Legislature a measure banning same-sex marriage and creating civil unions.

"We'll do everything possible in the coming months to make sure this measure does not pass when it comes before the Legislature again next year," said Matt Foreman, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director. "Failing that, we will defeat it at the polls in November 2006. Based on 31 years of fighting anti-gay extremists and bigotry, the task force is confident that equal rights will prevail."

Human Rights Campaign president Cheryl Jacques, a former Massachusetts state senator, called the vote a setback. However, she is optimistic that the amendment ultimately will fail.

"On May 17, marriage licenses will be issued to same-sex couples in Massachusetts," Jacques said. "American life will move forward as it always has with committed families caring for each other and taking responsibility for their own health and welfare. Over the next two years, as the constitutional process continues, the people of Massachusetts and America will see that marriage equality is good for families and good for America."

UTAH

Republican Gov. Olene Walker signed a measure into law March 23 that restates a 1996 Utah law that denies marriage rights and responsibilities to same-sex couples. The new law also bans civil unions, domestic partnerships or related legal protection for same-sex couples.

"It's a shame that the fearful,

closed-minded politics of a few so strongly influence a thoughtful person like Gov. Walker to sign such a divisive act into law," said Michael Mitchell, executive director of Equality Utah.

Senate Bill 24 was signed shortly after another divisive measure passed the Legislature—an anti-family amendment to the Utah Constitution that would ban marriage and any relationship recognition for same-sex couples. That measure will appear on the November ballot.

IOWA

The Iowa Senate defeated a discriminatory amendment to the state constitution March 23 that would have denied marriage to same-sex couples, even though a law invalidating such marriages already exists.

"The defeat of this discriminatory amendment shows respect for equality in Iowa's constitution," said Cheryl Jacques, Human Rights Campaign president. "The political ploy to shift focus from the real challenges facing Iowa has failed. Now Iowa lawmakers can get back to the business of helping Iowans."

KANSAS

The Kansas Senate rejected an amendment to the state constitution March 26 that would have denied marriage to same-sex couples, even though a law invalidating such marriages already exists. The legislation would have also banned civil unions and domestic partnerships.

"The heartland's rejection of discrimination is a beacon to every corner of America," said Cheryl Jacques, Human Rights Campaign



Olene Walker



Coretta Scott King called the Federal Marriage Amendment "a form of gay-bashing"

among those leading efforts to reject the measure, which needed a two-thirds majority to pass. It was defeated in a 17-16 vote.

NEW JERSEY

Civil rights leader Coretta Scott King spoke out March 23 against the proposed federal constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage.

"Gay and lesbian people have families, and their families should have legal protection, whether by marriage or civil union," said King, the widow of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. Delivering a lecture at Richard Stockton College of New Jersey in Pomona, she said, "A constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages is a form of gay-bashing, and it would do nothing at all to protect traditional marriages."

Jasmyne Cannick of the National Black Justice Coalition lauded King's bravery. "We hope that Mrs. King's statement will push more leaders in the African American community to speak out in opposition to the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment and support marriage equality for all Americans, regardless of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation," she said.

president. "The bipartisan Kansas vote shows fair-minded Americans are defeating efforts to enshrine discrimination into law."

Republican state Sen. David Adkins was

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