

NATIONAL news

all legal rights and protections for same-sex couples and their families, including domestic partnerships and equal marriage rights.

The two organizations said that together they would match \$1 for every \$4 raised through Labor Day to fight the amendment, up to \$200,000. Leaders of California's progressive organizations said they are confident they can take full advantage of the challenge and raise the \$800,000.

The \$200,000 challenge grant is the first large financial commitment to the newly launched Equality for All Coalition, an unprecedented alliance of more than 200 religious, labor and civil rights organizations from throughout California that will lead the campaign to defeat the initiative.

"Defeating this initiative is about ensuring equality for all California families and preserving California's leadership on fairness for its GLBT citizens," said Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign. "The unity and resolve of the coalition against this discriminatory and ugly initiative are unprecedented."

Matt Foreman, NGLTF's executive director, said: "We know that it's going to take a huge amount of money and intense organizing to defeat this hurtful and immoral initiative. This is too important, and we can neither afford to lose nor wait another day."

Geoffrey Kors, executive director of Equality California, added: "We are confident that if we can get the truth out about this extreme anti-gay, anti-single parent, anti-family amendment, California voters will reject it. This generous challenge from the task force and the Human Rights Campaign will definitely help us start that process."

Lorri L. Jean, chief executive officer of the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center, said: "The fight against the proposed constitutional amendment is going to be a tough one. We've lost in the past because our opponents have been better organized and better funded than we were, and they got started earlier. This national support is the

MARRIAGE RECOGNITION PROMOTES MENTAL HEALTH

Marriage recognition promotes positive mental health for sexual minorities, according to members of the American Psychiatric Association at its annual meeting last month in Atlanta.

If directors approve a statement for marriage equality next month, the group will be the first major medical organization to weigh in on the value of same-sex marriage.

According to the statement, marriage equality has a positive influence on the health of all family members. Barriers to health care, pension and other benefits, conversely, hurt the stability and mental health of queer couples.

A majority of the APA's estimated 250 members in attendance approved of the pro-marriage position. Some felt the need to clarify the organization's position as civil and not religious.

Canadian psychiatrist Joseph Berger stood against the statement, saying his group should respect countrywide votes against same-sex marriage. "It's very unusual for an organization like ours to take on an issue so contrary to where public sentiment is," he reportedly said.

Same-sex marriage is illegal in 40 states, including Oregon.

Other mental health organizations have followed suit in agreeing that marriage equality promotes mental health. Last July, the American Psychological Association issued a statement saying research indicated discrimination based on sexual orientation detrimentally affects the psychological, physical, social and economic well-being of gay, lesbian and bisexual people.

TOLERANCE MIXED IN MAINSTREAM AMERICA

Locally, sexual minorities are fighting for civil union legislation, while nationwide, the majority still resists queer equality, according to a recent Gallup poll.

The poll, which randomly surveyed 1,005 adults in May, indicates most Americans believe queers should have equal employment opportunities, though their support tapers in education and clergy fields.

The public's underlying belief that homosexuality is immoral seems to stymie progressive attitudes toward same-sex marriage, which the majority opposes. Barely half believe homosexual relations between consenting adults should be legal, and a majority says such relations are immoral. The majority says marriages between

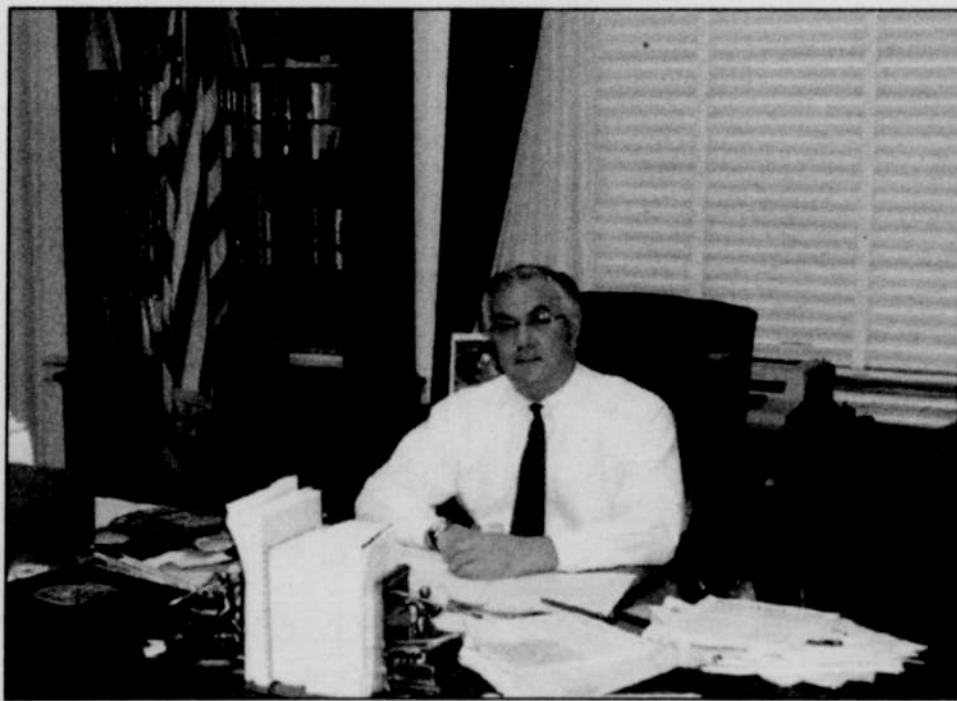
queers should not be recognized as legally valid; 39 percent say they should be valid.

While queers have made major gains in public perception in the past 30 years, opinions have improved only slightly during the past few years. Today, the percentage saying the queer lifestyle should be considered acceptable remains at just 51 percent, while 45 percent say it should not be acceptable.

But those polled are a fickle set, with favorable perceptions varying depending on whether the population is referred to as "gay and lesbian" or "homosexual." Americans prefer gays and lesbians to homosexuals, the poll indicates.

For more poll results, visit www.gallup.com. □

Compiled by SARAH DOUGHER



Congressman Barney Frank of Massachusetts has been instrumental in the effort to get gender identity protected at the federal level.

leverage we need to go toe to toe with the anti-gay forces who would deny us our equal rights."

Kate Kendell, executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, added: "The challenge is going to help us get up and running quickly—and will help spur other donations to the campaign. We welcome the leadership of our national partners in helping us get the resources we need."

Sponsors of the anti-marriage amendment, known as the Voters' Right to Protect Marriage Initiative, must submit nearly 600,000 voter signatures to the California secretary of state to qualify the measure for the June 2006 ballot. Amendment proponents have said they need to raise \$1 million immediately to gather the necessary signatures.

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