

AP Poll: Nuanced views on gay marriage

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Most Americans think the government should protect religious liberties over gay rights when the two come into conflict, a new Associated Press-GfK poll finds, though fewer think most businesses should be allowed to turn away gay couples because of religious beliefs.

The survey uncovered nuanced views on gay rights as the Supreme Court considers, in a case heard this week, whether the Constitution gives same-sex couples the right to marry.

Americans are more likely to say that religious liberties are more important for the government to protect than the rights of gays and lesbians, by a 56 percent to 40 percent margin, the poll found. Just a quarter of Americans call gay rights a very or extremely important issue to them personally, while half call religious liberties a very or extremely important issue.

But fewer Americans — just 40 percent — think most business owners should be allowed to refuse service to gays and lesbians on religious grounds.

That finding goes to the heart of the significant political fallout over Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which critics charged was intended to allow businesses discriminate against gays and lesbians.

With public opinion apparently split, it's an open question how gay rights will play in the 2016 campaign.

Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Leadership Conference, said Republicans would be wise to make religious freedom a central



AP Photo/Rick Bowmer

Opponents of same-sex marriage hold a rally at the Utah State Capitol Tuesday in Salt Lake City.

issue because the broad debate highlights intolerance against Christians. "Religious freedom will emerge as a centerpiece, and Democrats will have an impossible time defending against it," said Rodriguez, whose organization aligns with conservative Republicans on this issue.

Others think the issue could be perilous for the GOP. "Religious liberty works well with religious people, which is the GOP's base, but the argument is easily turned on its head when the issue is discrimination against gay people," said veteran Republican strategist John Feehery.

"I think the GOP is better off talking about economic security and national security, while leaving this particular issue to the courts to decide." Although only a minority

of poll respondents thought businesses generally should be able to discriminate against gays or lesbians, support was stronger for letting wedding-related businesses in particular refuse service to same-sex couples — 52 percent said so. That was down slightly since the beginning of February, when 57 percent said so in an earlier AP-GfK poll.

The new poll found a distinct split between Republicans and Democrats on the issue. Most Democrats opposed any such discrimination by businesses; most Republicans thought businesses should have the right to refuse service, whether generally or for wedding matters.

On marriage, just under half of Americans want it to

be legal for gay and lesbian couples to wed in their states, while just over a third are opposed, according to the poll.

There is a significant partisan divide over that issue, too, but it could be a moot point in the 2016 campaign if the Supreme Court affirms same-sex marriage.

On the court case, 50 percent said the justices should rule that gay marriage must be legal nationwide; 48 percent said they should not.

Kelly Huston, a retired autoworker from Newtown Falls, Ohio, says he doesn't object to gay marriage, just as he doesn't object to a business refusing to serve gay patrons.

"I think a business owner should decide what they want to do in their business," Huston said. "I'm not against gays. I'm against the government telling people how to run their businesses."

The issue could play differently in some regions than others. For example, the survey finds 60 percent of Southerners, but only 45 percent of Northeasterners or Westerners, say wedding-related businesses should be allowed to refuse service to gay couples.

In New Hampshire, which hosts the nation's first presidential primary election, a leading Republican official warns prospective candidates against a heavy focus on religious freedom.

"For the average Republican presidential primary voter in New Hampshire, that's not one of the top six or seven issues," said Steve Duprey, New Hampshire's national Republican committeeman. "I don't think there's anybody who could win the New Hampshire primary running on religious liberty."

Bill would take Alabama out of marriage licenses

Associated Press

Albritton said.

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — A state senator who wants to take Alabama out of the marriage license business says he's not targeting same-sex couples but trying to remove government from the process.

The Senate Judiciary Committee on Wednesday approved a bill by Sen. Greg Albritton, R-Range, that would do away with current state marriage licenses issued by probate judges. Instead, couples would take a contract witnessed by a couple's pastor, attorney or other witness and record the document at the court.

Albritton said he was not targeting same-sex marriages, but was trying to "bring order out of chaos." The legislation comes after a legal dispute over gay marriage led to some probate courts shutting down in Alabama and ahead of a highly anticipated U.S. Supreme Court decision that could legalize same-sex marriage nationwide.

"When you invite the state into those matters of personal or religious import, it creates difficulties," Albritton said.

"Go back long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away. Early twentieth century, if you go back and look and try to find marriage licenses for your grandparents or great grandparents, you won't find it. What you will find instead is where people have come in and recorded when a marriage has occurred,"

Lawyer Eric Johnston, who signed up to speak at a public hearing that was cancelled on the bill, said the change would prevent probate judges from having to issue marriage licenses that go against their religious beliefs if gay marriage becomes legal.

Albritton said his bill is based off of Oklahoma legislation.

Alabama went through a turbulent period after a federal judge in January struck down Alabama's ban on same-sex marriage. Most probate judges began issuing marriage licenses to gay couples, but others did not citing a conflicting directive from Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore to continue to refuse the licenses.

The weddings halted in March when the Alabama Supreme Court directed probate judges to not issue the marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

Alabama's only openly gay legislator said she "actually liked" Albritton's idea.

"It sort of takes the marriage decision out of the probate court," said state Rep. Patricia Todd, D-Birmingham. Todd is also the director of the Human Rights Campaign Alabama, an organization that works for gay and lesbian rights.

However, Todd said she scoffed at the notion that the bill wasn't about gay couples or same-sex marriage.

"Come on. Why did you do this now?" Todd said.

BRIEFLY

Nazarene women host spring tea

HERMISTON — A fun morning with the girls is planned by the Hermiston Church of the Nazarene.

Invite your grandmother, mom, aunt, sister, niece, friend or neighbor for a cup of tea and some tasty food and fellowship. The ladies Spring Tea is Saturday, May 9 at 10:30 a.m. at 1520 W. Orchard Ave. Tickets are \$3 per person and are available for purchase at the Women's Ministry Event table located in the back of the church's worship center.

Guest speaker Dawn Bissinger will share about Morning Connections for Adventurous Daily Living. Making God your first priority, Bissinger said, leads to extraordinary adventures with God each day.

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/events/1566447296952558 or call 541-567-3677.

First Friday features kids' fun

HEPPNER — A time of Bible stories, music, crafts, games and lunch are featured in the First Friday Friends of Jesus.

Open to ages 4-14, the event is Friday from 8 a.m. to noon at All Saints Episcopal Church, 460 N. Gale St., Heppner. Children are reminded to bring coins to conclude the fundraiser for Heifer International.

For more information, call 541-676-9970.

Ancient Biblical practice goes digital for Mormons

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Mormons will now be able to pay their tithing online, bringing modern flair to the Biblical practice started by Abraham.

The *Deseret News* reports that the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced Wednesday that members can now use a digital system to donate a portion of their income and to help fund missionaries.

Mormons give 10 percent of their income to the church, following a Biblical precedent set by Abraham in Genesis.

Currently, most members give their tithing to volunteer leaders who deposit it in

church accounts. Each year, Mormons must declare whether they consider themselves full tithers -- a status that is essential for active members to worship in the faith's temples.

The new system will become available in U.S. congregations this year.

Mormon apostle hospitalized, now recuperating

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Mormon apostle Richard G. Scott is recuperating at home after being hospitalized since Thursday for gastrointestinal bleeding. The *Salt Lake Tribune* reports his illness kept the 86-year-old from speaking at the Mormon church's General Conference.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints also put out a news release announcing that its oldest apostle, 92-year-old L. Tom Perry, is continuing to receive medical care at home after he was diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

Perry is the second-most senior member of the church's high-level governing body called the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Scott is also a member of the quorum.

The average age of the Quorum of the Twelve and the church's three governing members is 80, the highest in the Utah-based faith's history.

Oregon pastor convicted of child molestation

PORTLAND (AP) — The pastor of a small Oregon church described as cult-like by prosecutors has been convicted of molesting the daughter of a church member in the 1990s. He was immediately sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Michael George Sperou, 64, was found guilty Thursday by a Portland jury of three counts of unlawful sexual penetration.

Sperou was investigated in 1997 after seven girls said he had sexually molested them, but prosecutors never brought charges because of their conflicting statements.

Two years ago the seven girls again brought their complaints to police. Prosecutors determined the statute of limitations had expired on complaints by all but one of them.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Worship with us!

<p>Adams Community Church Duane Geyer, Pastor 140 N. Main, Adams, OR 566-9457 Worship 9 am</p>	<p>GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA OPEN HEARTS - OPEN DOOR www.graceandmercyutheran.org Sunday Worship 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:00 a.m. (Nursery Provided) Fellowship, Refreshments & Sunday School Check Out our Facebook Page or Website for More Information 541-289-4535 Tom Inch, Pastor Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church, ELCA 164 E. Main St. / P.O. Box 1108 Hermiston, Oregon 97838</p>	<p>St. Johns Episcopal Church All People Are Welcome Scripture, Tradition and Reason Family service 9am Sunday Gladys Ave & 7th Hermiston Fr. Dan Lediard, Priest. PH: 567-6672</p>	<p>Redeemer Episcopal Church 241 SE Second St. Pendleton (541)276-3809 www.pendletonepiscopal.org Sunday Morning Worship 9:00 a.m. Wednesday Worship Noon Wednesday Evening Prayer and Pot Luck 6:00 p.m. All Are Welcome</p>		
<p>Grace Baptist Church 555 SW 11th, Hermiston 567-9497 Nursery provided for all services Sunday School - 9:30 AM Worship - 10:45 AM 6:00 pm Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM "Proclaiming God's word, growing in God's grace"</p>	<p>FIRST CHURCH OF GOD First Service @ 8:30am Second Service @ 10:30am 712 SW 27th Pendleton 541-276-1894 www.fcogpendleton.com</p>	<p>FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH -Presbyterian Church (USA)- 201 SW Dorion Ave. Pendleton Service of Worship - 10:00 am Children's Sunday School - 10:20 am Fellowship - 11:00 am www.pendletonpresbyterian.com Open Hearted...Open Minded</p>	<p>Peace Lutheran Church ELCA 210 NW 9th, Pendleton Join us Sundays 9:30 am Sunday Worship 10:30 am Fellowship 11:00 am Sunday School & Adult Class ~Come and be at Peace~ on 1290 KUMA noon each Sunday</p>		
<p>FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH in Mission for Christ LCMC Bible Study.....9:00 AM Sunday Worship.....10:30 AM Red Lion Hotel (Oregon Trail Room) www.faithpendleton.org</p>	<p>Living Word Christian Center Sunday Worship Service 10:00 AM Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 PM Sharon Miller, Pastor 401 Northgate • Pendleton 278-8082 www.livingwordcc.com</p>	<p>The Salvation Army Center for Worship & Service Sunday Worship Service 9:30 - Sunday School 10:30 - Worship Service Wednesday Bible Study 5:30 Family Fellowship Meal 6:00 Bible Study COME AS YOU ARE 150 SE EMIGRANT (541)276-3369</p>	<p>New Hope Community Church Ministries for the entire family 1350 S Hwy 395, Hermiston Sunday Worship Services: 9 a.m. & 10:45 a.m. Classes for kids during both! Call 567-8441 Servicios en Español</p>		
<p>Community Presbyterian Church 14 Martin Drive, Umatilla, OR 922-3250 Worship: 10 AM Sunday School at 11:30</p>	<p>Faith Center Church Worshipping God • Loving People 108 S. Main • 276-9569 Sunday School 9:30 am Sunday Worship 10:30 am Sr. Pastor, Ray O'Grady pendletonfaithcenter.org</p>	<p>FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) 215 N Main • Pendleton Ph:541-276-5358 Web: www.fccpendleton.org Join us for 10:40am Sunday Worship with Sunday School at 9:30am. Wednesday Fellowship Meal & Study Groups-Open to All Ages-at 5:15pm. Quality Nursery Care is Offered at No Charge.</p>	<p>PILOT ROCK BAPTIST CHURCH 585 SW Birch, Pilot Rock, OR 97868 (541) 443-2500 prbconline.blogspot.com Sunday School: 9:30 am Worship Service: 10:45 am Wednesday Services: Kids' Club: 6:00 pm Youth Group: 7:00 pm</p>		
<p>a place to belong Pendleton First INVITING ENRICHING INVOLVING EMPOWERING SUNDAY SERVICES AM Celebration-10:00am AM Kids Place -10:00am The Connection--6:00pm Groups for all ages: Adults, Children, Youth, & College Thursdays Celebrate Recovery-6:00pm Celebration Place-6:00pm Other Groups Available Weekly For more info visit WWW.PENDLETONFIRST.COM 1911 SE Court Ave 541-276-6417 Assembly of God Church</p>	<p>Seventh-Day Adventist Church Saturday Services Pendleton 1401 SW Goodwin Place 276-0882 Sabbath School 9:20 am Worship Service 10:45 am</p>	<p>First United Methodist Church 352 SE 2nd St., Pendleton, OR Office 276-2616 New Pastor Dr. Jim Pierce Worship Service 9:00 AM Fellowship 10:15 AM Broadcast KUMA 11:00 AM Childcare available Choir practice Sundays 8:30 AM</p>	<p>BAHA'I FAITH "The Unity of All Mankind" Pendleton Baha'i Center at 1015 SE Court Place Devotions Sundays @ 11:00am; Everyone invited! (541) 276-9360 visit us at www.pendletonbahais.org</p>		
<p>GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH Services Sunday School 9:45 a.m. Sunday 11:00 a.m. & 6:00 p.m. Wednesday 7:00 p.m. 2809 S.W. Goodwin Ave. • Pendleton 541-276-3031</p>				<p>Pendleton FREE METHODIST CHURCH Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m. Mid-Week Children & Youth • Weekly Adult Life Groups 1711 SW 44th St. • 541-276-6015 • www.pendfmc.org</p>	