

July 22, 2010

Rhode Island Voters Support Marriage Equality Survey Results

To: Interested Parties

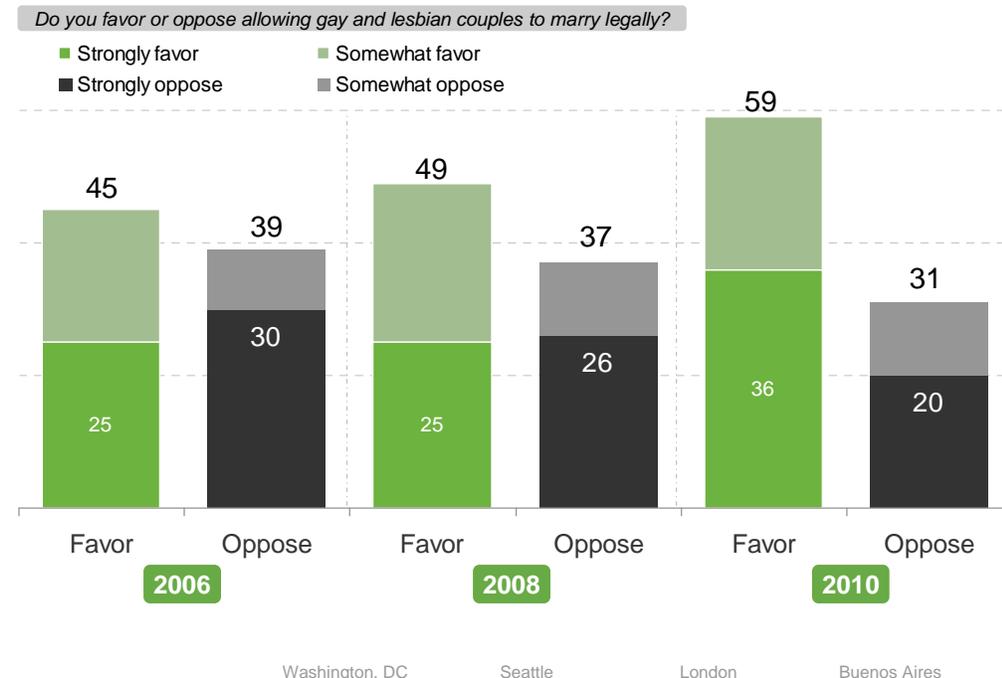
From: Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

Over the last two years, states such as Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, Iowa, as well as the District of Columbia have joined Massachusetts in providing its citizens marriage equality. Rhode Island is one of only two states in New England where same-sex marriage is prohibited, though Maine did pass an equality measure only to have it overturned by its voters last November. Now, for the first time since we started tracking this issue in Rhode Island four years ago, a substantial majority of Rhode Islanders support marriage equality. This represents a significant—that is, beyond the margin of error—increase in support for equality compared to 2008 and 2006.

Key Findings:

- For the first time, a majority of voters in Rhode Island favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to legally marry, representing a 10-point increase since 2008.

Figure 1: Majority Support for Marriage Equality in Rhode Island



- **This new, pro-equality majority includes a diverse set of Rhode Island voters.** It is not simply young voters in Rhode Island that support marriage equality, but also women over 50 (56 percent favor), Independents (58 percent), and parents (64 percent).
- **Catholics join the rest of the state in support for equality.** All told, 57 percent Catholic voters support allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally, representing a 12-point increase from 2008.
- **Support increases further when we provided First Amendment reassurance.** When told that marriage equality would not infringe on a church's right to marry whom they choose, support increases to 66 percent overall and 63 percent among Catholics.
- **Politically, this is a net positive vote for state legislators.** Asked about the impact of a vote for equality on their support, 27 percent say they would be more inclined to support a candidate, 24 percent are less inclined, and nearly half (46 percent) say it would make no difference. Only 13 percent are much less likely to support a pro-equality candidate.
- **Support reflects broad acceptance of the LGBT community.** Overall, fully eight in 10 (79 percent) voters here know a gay or lesbian person and 45 percent of Rhode Island voters describe their feelings toward gay and lesbian people as favorable, while just 18 percent are critical. Moreover, 75 percent believe "homosexuality is a way of life that should be accepted by society." In this state, the LGBT community is the mainstream.

Conclusion

As many of Rhode Island's sister states have moved toward equality, the majority we see here is not all that surprising. Rhode Island voters clearly are ready for change.

Appendix A: Methodology

Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research designed and administered this telephone survey conducted by professional interviewers.

The survey reached 502 likely voters in Rhode Island and was conducted July 7 – 12, 2010. The data were weighted by gender, age, and region to ensure an accurate reflection of the population. The sample size with these weights applied is 500. The margin of error for this survey is +/- 4.4 percent.

The 2006 survey also reached 500 likely voters in Rhode Island. It was conducted April 6-9, 2006. The 2008 survey included 500 likely voters and was conducted July 16-22, 2008. These surveys also carry a margin of error of +/- 4.4 percent.