



John Bonifaz
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Bonifaz Calls on Legislature to Investigate Charges of Fraud Before Voting on Anti-Gay Marriage Amendment

BOSTON – John Bonifaz, Democratic candidate for Secretary of State, today issued this statement on the upcoming Constitutional Convention debate on the anti-gay marriage amendment:

“The proposed anti-gay marriage constitutional amendment remains under a cloud of fraud. Prior to holding any vote on the amendment, the legislature should fully investigate whether the amendment is, in fact, properly before it or whether it has arrived there via illegal conduct.

“Within days after the signature-gathering began for this ballot measure, allegations surfaced throughout the state that signature collectors were using bait-and-switch tactics to deceive people into signing the petitions. MassEquality, a coalition defending equal marriage rights for same sex couples in Massachusetts, fielded numerous complaints of signature collectors who asked people to sign a petition to allow the sale of beer and wine in grocery stores, and instead collected the actual signatures on the anti-gay marriage form. Others reported signing a petition to ban greyhound racing and then discovered their names appearing in support of the anti-gay marriage amendment.

“Article 48 of our state constitution does not guarantee that a proposed constitutional amendment may proceed to a vote before the legislature if the signatures were gathered for the measure in a fraudulent manner.

“Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin failed to conduct any comprehensive investigation of these fraud charges. To the contrary, he certified all of the signatures presented for the anti-gay ballot measure despite acknowledging that thousands of those signatures matched the signatures presented for the measure related to the sale of beer and wine.

“Secretary Galvin’s failure to carry out his responsibilities as the state’s chief elections officer now means that the legislature must act to protect the integrity of our ballot initiative process.

“From the ratification of the Massachusetts Constitution to open town meetings, direct democracy – participation of the people – has deep roots in the history of this Commonwealth. But, in order to maintain the people’s trust, the process must be safeguarded against fraud. If people begin not to trust the fairness and legitimacy of the electoral process, our democracy is threatened.

“The proposed anti-gay marriage amendment – one that would deny basic equality to a great many couples in Massachusetts – should not proceed to a constitutional convention until the public can be assured that the measure’s proponents have gathered the necessary signatures free of manipulation and deceit.”

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