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# House gives initial OK to bid to ban gay marriage

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PHOENIX — Foes of gay marriage won a crucial victory Tuesday in the state House.

Without comment, lawmakers gave preliminary approval to a measure to constitutionally define marriage as solely between one man and one woman.

The same language had been approved earlier this month on a different bill, but it got derailed after the measure was amended to also grant certain rights to unmarried couples.

The additional provision was unacceptable to those who oppose same-sex marriages. So House backers let that bill die, with the plan of resurrecting the measure again.

This time, though, Rep. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Phoenix, did not offer that same amendment. Cathi Herrod, president of the Center for Arizona Policy, said her group had lobbied to find enough votes to kill the amendment.

A final House roll-call vote scheduled for later today will send SCR 1042 to the Senate, which has not yet debated the issue this session.

The procedure maneuver used by supporters of the new version of the gay-marriage ban effectively blocks opponents from trying to amend the measure in the Senate.

The verbiage is attached to an unrelated bill that already has been approved by the Senate. That means senators have only two choices: Approve the House-passed version of the measure or reject it, with no opportunity to amend it.

Sinema was combative when asked what plans, if any, she has to short-circuit the new measure.

"Do you think I'm going to answer that question?" she said. "Do I look stupid?"

As to a possible strategy, she said: "And if I have one, which I may, I'm not telling you guys."

But Rep. Eddie Farnsworth, R-Gilbert, who is pushing the ban, said he sees Tuesday's action — and Sinema's failure to again try to amend the bill — as an important signal.

"She obviously didn't have the votes," he said.

Tuesday's action is an important move to putting the issue on the ballot in November.

Voters narrowly rejected a similar measure in 2006, a measure that would have gone well beyond just banning same-sex marriages.

It also would have prohibited governments from providing benefits to the domestic partners of their employees and barred the courts or lawmakers from recognizing "civil unions" that give unmarried couples some of the same privileges as marriage.

Farnsworth said he believes voters would approve a simple ban on gay nuptials.

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Download a copy of the proposed amendment.

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