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Maryland Same-Sex Marriage Referendum Faces a Divided Public New OpinionWorks Poll Shows More Energy on Opponents' Side

ANNAPOLIS, MD – Maryland voters lean narrowly in favor of repealing the same-sex marriage law recently passed by the Maryland General Assembly and signed by Governor O'Malley, according to a new statewide voter poll released today by the independent Annapolis-based firm OpinionWorks.

The poll of 601 Maryland registered voters conducted March 16-19, 2012 found that 43% would vote to make same-sex marriage illegal in Maryland, while 40% would vote to make it legal. An additional 11% have no opinion or said they may not vote on the matter, and 5% intend to vote but are not sure how they feel. The poll has a margin of error of $\pm 4.0\%$.

“Although this result is within the poll’s margin of error, it is the intensity of feeling among same-sex marriage opponents that causes the overall result to lean slightly towards repeal,” said Steve Raabe, OpinionWorks President. While 37% of Maryland voters “strongly” feel they will vote to make same-sex marriage illegal in Maryland, only 31% of voters strongly feel they will vote to make it legal.

But in an indication that this referendum could trend in the direction of upholding the same sex marriage law in the months ahead, those who remain undecided on the referendum tend to be slightly more Democratic and younger, and less religious than the population as a whole – all groups that lean towards upholding the law.

This issue presents a host of interesting subgroup differences, which are detailed in the accompanying table. Briefly:

- The most religious voters, in other words those who attend worship about once a week, oppose same sex marriage by 58% to 28%, while those who do not attend worship at all support it by 66% to 21%.
- Registered Democrats and Independents have identical views on this issue (45% to 38% in favor), while Republicans are strongly opposed (60% to 26%).
- There is a significant gender gap, with women favoring same sex marriage by 9 percentage points (47% to 38%), while men oppose it by 16 points (49% to 33%).

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- A plurality of white voters would vote to make same-sex marriage legal (46% to 40%), while African-American voters lean strongly towards making it illegal (48% to 29%).
- Geographically, attitudes vary widely, ranging from two-to-one support in Montgomery County (58% to 29%), to overwhelming opposition on the Eastern Shore (72% to 14%).
- Voters in the 35 to 49 age group are most supportive of same-sex marriage (50% to 34%), while voters over age 65 are most opposed (54% to 32%).

“It is likely that people with the strongest feelings on this issue have already declared themselves, so that the referendum battle will be waged over the small number in the middle who may be coming out to vote in the presidential race, but for whom this issue is not do or die,” Raabe said.

This poll was paid for by OpinionWorks and was not sponsored or influenced by any outside organization or interest.

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Question Wording

“The General Assembly has passed and the Governor has signed a law to make same-sex marriage legal in Maryland. Opponents of the law are trying to place it on the ballot this November for the people to decide. If it comes to that, will you vote to make same-sex marriage legal or illegal in Maryland?” (*If legal or illegal*): “Do you feel that way strongly or only somewhat?”

Brief Background on OpinionWorks

OpinionWorks conducts frequent opinion studies for the media, government agencies, and public interest groups through the Mid-Atlantic and in selected regions across the country. OpinionWorks is the polling organization for *The Baltimore Sun* newspaper, having accurately forecast the 14-point Maryland gubernatorial margin in 2010 and the Baltimore mayoral margin in 2011. We are currently working for public agencies in Ohio, New York, Utah, Maryland, and the District of Columbia measuring attitudes on a variety of health, education, and public service delivery questions.

How This Polling Was Conducted

OpinionWorks interviewed 601 randomly-selected registered voters across Maryland by telephone March 16–19, 2012. The poll has a potential sampling error of no more than $\pm 4.0\%$ at a 95% confidence level, meaning the survey results would differ by no more than that margin at least 95% of the time if every registered voter in Maryland had been interviewed.

Interviewees were drawn randomly from the database of registered voters provided by the Maryland State Board of Elections and matched with telephone numbers by a commercial vendor. The sample was balanced regionally and by political party, and screened to ensure that only registered voters were interviewed. Weights were applied to bring the voter sample into strict compliance with the demographic breakdown of Maryland’s registered voter population.

Subgroup Analysis

	Legal	Illegal	Net
All Voters	40%	43%	- 3%
<u>Attend Worship:</u>			
...about once a week	28%	58%	- 30%
...once or twice a month	28%	50%	- 22%
...less often than that	54%	26%	+ 28%
...not at all	66%	21%	+ 45%
<u>Party Registration:</u>			
Republicans	26%	60%	- 34%
Democrats	45%	38%	+ 7%
Independents	45%	38%	+ 7%
<u>Gender:</u>			
Male	33%	49%	- 16%
Female	47%	38%	+ 9%
<u>Race/Ethnicity:</u>			
African-American	29%	48%	- 19%
White	46%	40%	+ 6%
All others	45%	48%	- 3%
<u>Major Jurisdiction/Region:</u>			
Baltimore City	35%	49%	- 14%
Baltimore County	42%	39%	+ 3%
Montgomery County	58%	29%	+ 29%
Prince George's County	40%	37%	- 3%
Greater Washington ¹	51%	34%	+ 17%
Greater Baltimore ²	38%	43%	- 5%
Western Maryland ³	29%	60%	- 31%
Eastern Shore	14%	72%	- 58%
Southern Maryland	32%	59%	- 27%
<u>Age:</u>			
Less than 35	40%	40%	-
35 - 49	50%	34%	+ 16%
50 - 64	39%	43%	- 4%
65 or over	32%	54%	- 22%

¹Includes Charles, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's

²Includes Anne Arundel, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll, Harford, Howard

³Includes Allegany, Garrett, Washington