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Opinion

EDITORIAL: Senate surprise

Saturday, December 5, 2009

New York proponents of same-sex marriage got half of what they wanted this week — a roll call vote on the floor of the state Senate, which had blocked the measure already passed by the Assembly.

The other half, which would have been passage, will have to wait.

The Senate defeated the measure in no uncertain terms, 38 to 24, with all 30 Republicans opposed.

The lopsided defeat was a surprise to many. It certainly was a surprise to us.

We support same-sex marriage as an issue of fundamental fairness. Civil marriage is a voluntary, contractual merging of fortunes between two consenting adults who wish to bring their lives together as one. Nothing more. Nothing less. There certainly is no civil imperative that spouses procreate; indeed, most Americans pretty much think that's none of the government's business.

What unions religions decide to sanctify is the business of each religion.

But American governments ought not deny such a right to its citizens on the basis of sexual orientation.

A bare majority of New Yorkers think likewise. The Marist Institute for Public Opinion released a poll this week that shows 51 percent of the state's registered voters support same-sex marriage, while 42 percent oppose it.

We had favored a vote in the Senate, thinking New York legislators might follow the model of adjacent Vermont, where a legislator who had been expected to vote nay crossed over to decide the issue favorably by a single vote.

Silly us, expecting a halo effect of conscience when forced to choose up sides. In this state's Legislature? What on earth were we thinking?

Still, we certainly expected better of the Mid-Hudson contingent of state senators: Stephen Saland, William Larkin, John Bonacic, Vincent Leibell and James Seward, Republicans all and all no votes on this civil rights issue.

Say this for the vote — at least voters now know where their representatives stand. For the future of this issue, that's progress.

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