Poll: Majority of N.J. voters favor putting gay marriage on ballot

Published: Tuesday, February 14, 2012, 6:00 AM

By Matt Friedman/Statehouse Bureau

TRENTON — One day after the state Senate voted to give same-sex couples the right to marry, a new poll shows the majority of New Jersey voters support gay marriage but also think it should be put on the ballot for voters to decide.

A newly-released Rutgers-Eagleton poll of 914 registered voters found 54 percent favor gay marriage, while 35 percent oppose it.

But almost the exact same number — 53 percent — supports Gov. Chris Christie’s call to put it on the ballot.

“It’s surprising that so many of those who support same-sex marriage are also in favor of a referendum,” said pollster David Redlawsk. “It may be that given several polls showing majority support among voters, supporters of same-sex marriage think it would win in November. But in the face of a likely intensive campaign from opponents, this could be wishful thinking.”

The poll also found the public does not put a high priority on gay marriage, even though Senate and Assembly Democrats put it at the top of their agenda this year. Just 3 percent of respondents called it the most important issue facing New Jersey, while 19 percent said it was very important, 36 percent said it was somewhat important and 41 percent it was not important at all.

The poll was conducted from Feb 9. to Feb. 11 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.3 percentage points.

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