

Rell against proposed amendment banning gay marriage

August 27, 2004, 1:51 AM EDT

HARTFORD, Conn. -- She vows to work hard to get President Bush re-elected this fall, but Republican Gov. M. Jodi Rell is breaking from the GOP ranks in opposing a proposed constitutional amendment that would ban gay marriage.

Rell will lead Connecticut's delegation to the Republican National Convention next week in New York City. While saying she does not approve of the entire GOP agenda, Rell says the party has her ultimate loyalty, the Connecticut Post reported.

"I also do not support a constitutional amendment on the issue of gay marriage," Rell said Thursday. "Our constitution should be reserved for other matters."

Rell became governor on July 1 when John G. Rowland resigned amid a federal corruption probe and the threat of impeachment.

On Wednesday, seven gay couples who were recently denied marriage licenses in Connecticut filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the state's marriage laws. Activists are also planning to lobby the legislature next year to approve a gay marriage law similar to one in Massachusetts.

Rell said that she would not go that far in supporting expanded rights, but indicated she might sign expanded civil-rights legislation for gay and lesbian couples.

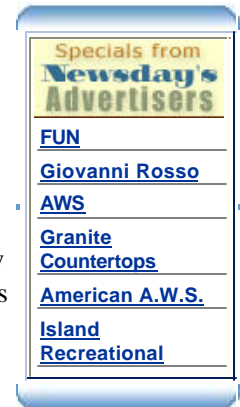
"I believe very strongly in the marriage between a man and a women, but frankly, the denial of benefits to all couples, regardless of sex or national origin, certainly has no place in our society," Rell said. "Connecticut has been very much up front in addressing that."

Rell intends to be at the convention Monday and Tuesday, a change from her original plan of Tuesday and Thursday.

"It's changing on an hourly basis," Rell said. "I'd like to have my schedule confirmed as well but it appears that it will be Monday now."

The 30 delegates and 26 alternates will begin arriving at the Sheraton New York Hotel on Sunday to begin the four-day nationwide rollout for Bush's re-election.

In all, there will be 2,509 delegates and 2,344 alternates, according to the Republican National Committee, which will host the partisan festivities in New York's Madison Square Garden.



Copyright © 2004, The Associated Press