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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28, 2004

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2004

## Same-sex marriage ban appears dead

■ Even if it passes the Senate, it won't be heard in House.

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A proposed amendment to the state constitution defining marriage as a bond between one man and one woman appeared dead after a key lawmaker said the bill would not receive a hearing in the House.

A Senate committee was scheduled to hear the bill Tuesday, but the chairman of the House Rules and Legislative Procedure Committee said he would not grant the bill a hearing even if it passed the Senate.

"With the multitude of issues we have to deal with that deal directly with people's lives, this just isn't a priority at

this moment," said Rep. Scott Pelath, D-Michigan City.

Republican Sen. Brandt Hershman of Wheatfield, who sponsored the joint resolution, said he was disappointed by Pelath's decision.

"I think it's a worthy public debate to be had, regardless of the outcome," Hershman said.

Republican Attorney General Steve Carter said Friday that an amendment would protect state marriage laws from legal challenge, but Democratic Gov. Joe Kernan said that there was no need for an amendment.

Tina Noel, Kernan's press secretary, said Monday that Kernan also did not see the need for a law supporting civil

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unions between people of the same sex.

"If a civil union law was proposed, it's not something he would support at this time," she said.

Republican candidate for governor Mitch Daniels said he did not favor

an amendment banning same-sex unions but would confer with Carter to determine if it were necessary.

"I personally believe in the traditional definition of marriage," Daniels said. "I also believe this is a decision the people of the state should be permitted to make, and should not be made by judges or taken from them by judges here, let alone in another state."

Conservative activist Eric Miller, who also is seeking the GOP nomi-

nation for governor, said an amendment was needed at both the state and federal level.

Banning same-sex marriage was not a pressing issue for Indiana, said House Speaker B. Patrick Bauer, D-South Bend.

"It's not a major issue that I've heard of," he said. "If the people in Washington want to create issues, they can do that. We don't need to create issues. We have enough issues as it is."