

Nevada may be losing tourist dollars with anti-gay marriage law

By Mark Robison, Reno Gazette-Journal

Actions by Nevada voters in 2000 and 2002 are costing the state tourism dollars now and may for decades to come.

The state's constitutional ban on marriage by same-sex couples may also cost Nevada its reputation as the marriage capital of the world.

It's possible that Nevada's voters find same-sex marriage a bigger threat than a faltering tourism industry, but if we prefer to strengthen our tourist trade, then time is running short.

For decades, Nevada has been ahead of the rest of the country on marriage and divorce.

Other states required blood tests, waiting periods or both before couples could marry. Nevada didn't get in the way of love, however impulsive.

And divorce, too. Other states made divorce onerous and only doable for certain narrow reasons. Nevada said almost any excuse could be given for divorce – with no proof – if only you lived here for a few weeks.

Women and men took up temporary residence here, bringing money they spent at casinos, hotels, bars and "divorce ranches." Arthur Miller famously stayed at Pyramid Lake Ranch until his divorce could be final so he could marry Marilyn Monroe.

The state moved away from its reputation as being more libertarian than the rest of the nation with regard to

marriage when voters in 2000 and 2002 overwhelmingly approved adding a sentence to Nevada's constitution: "Only a marriage between a male and female person shall be recognized and given effect in this state."

At the time, supporters said they worried that someday schools might teach children that homosexual relationships are moral and that Nevada would have to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states – never mind that Nevada once benefited from other states having to recognize the unconventional, quickie marriages performed here.

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