

Nev. issues 255 gay marriage licenses in 1 week

By Kimberly Pierceall, AP

Of the 2,344 couples who lined up at marriage license bureaus across Nevada in the seven days after courts put an end to the state's gay marriage ban, about 255 were same-sex couples.

The figures were based on polling by the Associated Press of each county clerk.

The numbers don't signal a matrimonial jackpot, but those with a stake in the wedding industry, like longtime Reno chapel owner George Flint, say it's going to take time to see an impact on the state's bottom line.

"Once the word really gets out that this is available in Nevada, I think we'll get a lot more business than we've seen the last two weeks," Flint said.

Northern Nevada could use the business. The 8,316 marriage licenses issued last year in Washoe County which covers Reno was the lowest the number has been since 1938.

"We needed the boost," Flint said. Of the 99 weddings his Chapel of the Bells performed in the last two weeks, 12 were for same-sex couples.

Not surprisingly, the marriage license bureau serving the Las Vegas area in Clark County, open daily from 8 a.m. to midnight, still accounted for more than 80 percent of all the marriage licenses issued in that time, including same-sex marriage licenses. Washoe County issued 37 same-sex marriage licenses in seven days, about 18 percent of all the licenses that week.

"Frankly, we were expecting to issue more licenses than we

have following the court ruling,” said Washoe County Clerk Nancy Parent.

In a few rural Nevada counties, not a single marriage license was issued for straight or same-sex couples in that time.

A June study from the Williams Institute at UCLA said the state could expect to see anywhere from 980 to 2,285 Nevada same-sex couples marry in the first year it was legal. The study said the new crop of weddings could bring \$14.4 million to \$33.5 million in spending in that time.

It’s the long-term impact that will be one to watch, said David Paisely, senior research director with Community Marketing & Insights, a San Francisco-based marketing firm that helps companies and organizations reach lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender customers.

“You just can’t expect a frenzy anymore,” he said, noting the proliferation of states with marriage equality. What destinations like Las Vegas and others can do now is simply reach out to newly engaged couples in the initial throes of wedding planning, not unlike straight couples.

Sure, California had a bit of a head start on neighboring Nevada when gay marriages restarted in 2013, but it’s not too late for Las Vegas, he said. For a time, same-sex couples married in certain places because they needed to, lacking few options.

Now they can wed where they want to.

“All the old rules are gone now,” he said.