

Gay protest mainly a bust

By the Post-Dispatch staff
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Gay protest mainly a bust (3:31 p.m., Aug. 3)
Contributed by Jo Mannies in St. Louis

At least one local gay couple unsuccessfully applied for a marriage license today -- but it's unclear if anyone else did. Tim Coleman and Erick Semenske say they showed up at St. Louis City Hall around 11 a.m. to apply for a license, and were politely turned away. Almost a dozen city police officers were on hand, to prepare for the crowd of gay protesters who never came. "They asked if more were coming, or if we were it," Semenske said.

Semenske was the local coordinator for what gay-rights activists had hoped would be a wave of "peaceful protests" of gay couples seeking marriage licenses across the state. The aim was to protest today's one-year anniversary of the statewide vote that, in effect, banned gay marriage. Rob Morgan, a St. Louis gay activist, said he'd heard that a few lesbian couples showed up in Clayton, and another handful across the state. Those reports couldn't be confirmed today.

Less than a handful of supporters attended a 1 p.m. rally at Tower Grove Park.

Morgan, who was among them, blamed the hot weather and the fact that it was a workday. His partner, for example, couldn't get off work, Morgan said. "I was a little disappointed, to be perfectly frank," Morgan said. Such a show of apathy in the gay community, he added, demonstrates "why the amendment happened in the first place."

The city of St. Louis is the friendliest territory for gays, since it was the only jurisdiction in the state where a majority of voters rejected the amendment. Mayor Francis Slay has been conducting an unscientific poll regarding gay marriage on his Web site, mayorslay.com. As of this afternoon, 80 percent of the poll participants backed gay marriage, while another 13 percent supported civil unions.