

## Recall election a test of values

Written by Taipei Times Editorial  
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On Saturday, a record 123,000 people reportedly marched through the streets of Taipei in an annual parade that since it was first held in 2003 has advocated for equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

Unlike previous events, this year's parade, which attracted participants not only from across Taiwan, but from all of Asia, was infused with a celebratory ambience.

Indeed, this year has been a year of celebration, thanks to the unprecedented Council of Grand Justices' Interpretation No. 748 issued in May, which guarantees the legalization of same-sex marriage in Taiwan within two years.

However, as Taiwan enjoys its hard-earned accolades as a beacon for progressive values and equal rights in Asia, on the other side of the social spectrum, a lawmaker is on the brink of being recalled because of his support for same-sex marriage.

The Central Election Commission on Tuesday announced that a recall drive initiated against New Power Party (NPP) Legislator Huang Kuo-chang (黃國昌) by head of an anti-LGBT group, Greater Taipei Stability Power Alliance chairman Sun Chi-cheng (孫志誠), had met all the requirements for a recall election, which has been set for Dec. 16.

According to the Civil Servants Election and Recall Act (公職人員選舉罷免法), Huang, who was in 2014 elected in the 12th electoral district of New Taipei City, is to be removed from office if 25 percent or more of the total eligible voters in his constituency vote in favor of his ouster — which would require about 62,700 voters.

When the drive was first launched last year, it was shrugged off by both Huang and his supporters. Trying to recall a lawmaker for advocating gay marriage in this century seems as preposterous as attempting to remove a female public office holder simply because she is a woman.

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The bottom line is that few people thought the recall drive would make it this far.

To bolster its justification for seeking Huang's removal, the alliance lists a total of seven reasons why it initiated the recall drive, including his failure to denounce Japan during fishing rights disputes and allegations that he was romantically involved with female students when he taught at the National University of Kaohsiung.

The overarching theme is what the alliance has called Huang's "deliberate concealment" of his support for same-sex marriage when running for legislative office.

It also accuses the NPP lawmaker of neglecting his unfulfilled campaign promises and rigorously pushing for an agenda that could "dispute our national growth, as well as family traditions and structure."

Although Huang's electoral district accounts for only a fraction of the nation's voting population, the fact that the drive made it to the final stage serves as a warning that some sectors of Taiwanese society continue to be dominated by conservative and discriminatory values.

If the recall drive succeeds, how will the international community perceive our nation? Will Taiwan continue to be considered a leading promoter of universal equality, human rights and democratic practices in Asia?

Legalizing same-sex marriage is perhaps one of a few things that could put a marginalized nation such as Taiwan on the map. Against this background, the recall election is really a test of the nation's collective wisdom and values. Let us keep our fingers crossed.

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