



People who sign petitions calling for public votes on controversial subjects don't have an automatic right to hide their names, the Supreme Court ruled Thursday as it sided against Washington state voters worried about harassment because of their desire to repeal that state's gay rights law.

The high court ruled against Protect Marriage Washington, which organized a petition drive for a public vote to repeal the state's "everything-but-marriage" gay rights law.

Petition signers wanted to hide their names because of worries of intimidation. But the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco refused to keep their names secret. The Supreme Court stepped in and temporarily blocked release of the names until the high court could make a decision.

The court now says disclosing names on a petition for a public referendum does not chill the signer's freedom of speech enough to warrant overturning the state's disclosure law.

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