



An unprecedented vote to remove three Iowa Supreme Court justices who were part of the unanimous decision that legalized same-sex marriage in the state was celebrated by conservatives as a popular rebuke of judicial overreach, even as it alarmed proponents of an independent judiciary.

The outcome of the election was heralded both as a statewide repudiation of same-sex marriage and as a national demonstration that conservatives who have long complained about “legislators in robes” are able to effectively target and remove judges who issue unpopular decisions.

Leaders of the recall campaign said the results should be a warning to judges elsewhere.

“I think it will send a message across the country that the power resides with the people,” said Bob Vander Plaats, an unsuccessful Republican candidate for governor who led the campaign. “It’s we the people, not we the courts.”

But critics of the campaign, including those who see the courts as a protector of minority rights, said the politicization of uncontested judicial elections represented a danger.

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