

Time key element in getting anti-gay initiative on November ballot

By Gary E. Swan
Staff Writer

The voters may have the final say on the county's controversial gay rights ordinance but they may not have it until after the November election.

Leaders of a church-oriented group opposed to the new sexual preference ordinance say they probably already have the necessary 37,092 signatures needed to force a referendum.

Petitions will be circulated again

through neighborhoods and shopping centers this weekend in hopes of collecting more than 100,000 names in a show of strength for a popular vote, said Rick Harrington, leader of the campaign.

Harrington said the group has collected 30,000 signatures and that many incomplete petitions are still being circulated.

But George Mann, county registrar of voters, said he doubts whether there is enough time to check the signatures and complete the paperwork

necessary to get the referendum before the voters Nov. 6.

In that case, Mann said, the ordinance would be suspended until the supervisors call a special election or until the next scheduled countywide vote in June.

A special election would cost the county about \$250,000, Mann said.

"In my opinion it would be very foolish to call a special election for that purpose," he said. "You couldn't have it until December or January and you'd only get a small turnout."

If enough signatures are collected, the board has two options: to rescind the ordinance, or to put a referendum on the ballot.

Most supervisors are on vacation but spokesmen for three of the four members who voted for the ordinance Aug. 6 said those members would not oppose a referendum.

"The board should save us the trauma and expense of special election by rescinding the ordinance," Harrington said. "It's always expensive when you don't have good people in office."

The board voted Aug. 6 to enact the ordinance which bans discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, employment, business, real estate transactions and access to government services.

A similar ordinance awaits a final vote by the San Jose City Council.

Harrington and a group of fundamentalist Christian clergymen, claim that such ordinances are contrary to community moral standards.

SJ Merc, 8/24/79