

## **OUR VIEW: Cowardly solons win another round**

By The Patriot Ledger

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Put your views on gay marriage aside for a moment and focus on what happened this week at the Commonwealth's Constitutional Convention.

Nothing happened, you might say. But you'd be wrong.

What occurred was a very big something for tens of thousands of residents who took the time to sign petitions, work through our legal and civic requirements and file a petition for a referendum vote on an issue -- and even for those who chose not to participate in the process.

The leadership of the Legislature and many of our representatives and senators who follow that leadership, ducked under cover of procedural flim flam and refused to take a stand on whether the referendum to amend the constitution should get on the ballot. Instead, they voted yeah or nay on adjourning the convention until 2 p.m. Jan. 2, the last day of the current legislative session. The process stops dead at the stroke of midnight that night.

This is nothing short of a collective insult to every citizen -- and a pathetic example of what is wrong with our state government.

The only bright spot in this sad civic tale is that not all of our elected representatives followed the cowardly path. To those 87 who voted against recess, we say thank you for having some strength of character.

The Patriot Ledger believes the Supreme Judicial Court made the right decision on the issue of gay marriage based on the state constitution's guarantee of equal treatment under the law.

However, the right of petition must also be respected. It is meant to guarantee the people a voice when they feel they have been ignored - exactly what is happening in this case.

Lame duck governor Mitt Romney seems to have joined this talk-big act-small Beacon Hill coterie as well. He was quick enough in making opposition to the SJC a plank of his national roadshow, in a bid to glean support from the conservative right. Now, when he could show some mettle, he has backed off and taken an ineffectual, hand-wringing posture.

The governor-elect Deval Patrick rallied thousands of citizens this week with a message of hope and empowerment. "Yes we can" was the cry, and it motivated a remarkable turnout of voters who wanted and needed to believe that change in government accountability, programs and operations is possible.

Apparently that cry fell on the deafest of ears on Beacon Hill.

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