

Conservative wins second bishop election in South Carolina: Mark Lawrence, formerly of San Joaquin, California

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The Episcopal Church has approved the election of a conservative priest as bishop of South Carolina—one year after officials nullified his election amid fears that he would lead the diocese to secede from the national church.

Mark Lawrence, 56, formerly a priest in the traditionalist diocese of San Joaquin, California, has twice been elected bishop of South Carolina.

Episcopal presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori threw out the first election last March, ruling that Lawrence did not receive enough “consents,” or approval from a majority of U.S. dioceses, by the required date.

Bishops-elect must gain consents from a majority of the church’s 111 dioceses in order to be consecrated. Lawrence gained 57 last year, but Jefferts Schori ruled that some were submitted improperly.

J. Haden McCormick, president of South Carolina’s diocesan standing committee, said on October 29 that Lawrence has already gained the necessary consents this time around. The exact number is still undetermined, however, since balloting remains open.

McCormick said the diocese has worked closely with Jefferts Schori on the election and has “nothing but a very positive relationship” with her.

McCormick said some dioceses that had blocked Lawrence’s election “had a misunderstanding of Mark Lawrence, and they reconsidered and listened to what he said and what he wrote and had a change of heart.” Lawrence will be consecrated January 26 in Charleston. *-Religion News Service*