

Riot police clash with protesters in Paris as 300,000 take to the streets to demonstrate against gay marriage

- Police sprayed tear gas as protesters charged towards the Champs-Elysees
- The leader of the Christian Democrats collapsed when she was teargassed
- Organisers say 1.5million people attended the protest opposing the bill
- The Senate will vote on the 'marriage for everyone' bill next month
- It would allow homosexual couples to get married and adopt children

Paris riot police fought back crowds who pushed their way onto Paris' landmark Champs-Elysees avenue today as part of a huge protest against a draft law allowing same-sex couples to marry and adopt children. Up to 300,000 people - conservative activists, children, retirees, priests - converged on the capital in a last-ditch bid to stop the bill, many bussed in from the French provinces.

The lower house of France's parliament approved the 'marriage for everyone' bill last month with a large majority, and it's facing a vote in the Senate next month.

At least 300,000 people converged on the centre of Paris in a protest opposing the bill that will allow homosexual couples to get married and adopt children



Riot police spray teargas on demonstrators during clashes on the Champs-Elysees avenue in Paris



A protestor appears to throw a traffic cone at a line of riot police during the demonstration

Both houses are dominated by French President Francois Hollande's Socialist Party and its allies. Sustained protests led by opposition conservatives in this traditionally Catholic country have eroded support for the draft law in recent months, and organizers hope Sunday's march will weigh on the Senate debate.

The first few hours of the protest were peaceful. But as it was meant to be winding down, about 100 youths tried to push past police barricades onto the Champs-Elysees, the avenue that cuts through central Paris and draws throngs of tourists daily.

In an indication of the sensitivity of the issue, protesters had been barred from marching on the Champs.

Christine Boutin, leader of the French Christian Democratic Party, was pictured lying on the ground in the Champs-Elysees, after being teargassed by police during the demonstration.

Last year she said that she remained strongly opposed to same-sex marriage and claimed that it would lead to polygamy.



Many people were bussed in from the provinces to try and boost numbers before the protest turned violent



Thousands of French conservatives, families and activists took part in the demonstration against the new law



Christine Boutin, leader of the French Christian Democratic Party, lies on the ground after being teargassed



Christine Boutin sat slumped on the ground after clashing with police. Last year she said that she remained strongly opposed to same-sex marriage and claimed that it would lead to polygamy

Police officers wrangled with the youths and then fired tear gas to force them back.

Gaining momentum, more and more protesters took side streets to reach the avenue, blocking a key intersection on the route to the president's Elysee Palace.

Police fired more tear gas but were unable to block the crowds from spilling onto the avenue. 'Hollande, Resignation!' the protestors chanted, before breaking into the French anthem, 'La Marseillaise.' The demonstrations have become outlets for anger and disappointment in Hollande's presidency.

An official with the Paris police headquarters said two people were arrested and no injuries were reported. The police official was not authorized to be publicly named in accordance with police policy.



Violence erupted when hundreds of youths charged towards the Champs Elysee, which had a protest ban



A teenager clammers on top of a car as fellow protesters wave flags and shout slogans opposing the bill



Women dressed up in costumes from the French revolution and wore gags as they took part in the protest



A protestor holds a placard reading 'We want jobs, not gay marriage' during the demonstration in Paris

The official estimated that 300,000 people took part in Sunday's march, slightly less than a similar march in January. Organisers estimated more than 1.2million people took part in Sunday's march, more than in the January protest. Polls indicate a shrinking majority of French voters back gay marriage, which is legal in about a dozen mostly European nations and some U.S. states. But polls show French voters are less enthusiastic about adoption by same-sex couples. Frigide Barjot, the stage name of an activist who has led protests against the bill, insisted the anti-gay marriage movement wasn't a lost cause. 'It's the second round, sir. It's not the last battle.'