



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on June 23, 2011

Calif. Muslims, Jews File Lawsuit Against Circumcision Ban

The recent efforts to ban circumcision in San Francisco have brought about one curious unintended result: Muslim and Jewish Americans have teamed up in the city to file a lawsuit against the ballot measure. The “unlikely coalition,” as dubbed by *The Blaze*, was formed because the ritual of circumcision is common to both the Muslim and Jewish faiths.



Now that San Francisco election officials have confirmed that there are enough signatures to qualify the initiative for the ballot, the city will be the first to hold a public vote on banning male circumcision. If passed, the measure would prohibit circumcision on males under the age of 18, making it a misdemeanor punishable by either a fine of up to \$1,000 or up to a year in jail.

It is because the measure would permit no exemptions, including for religious reasons, that Jewish and Muslim residents are collaborating in the lawsuit. *The Blaze* notes,

The case filed in San Francisco Superior Court asks the court to remove the voter initiative from the city’s Nov. 8 ballot, arguing that California law bars local governments from restricting medical procedures.

The lawsuit includes five Jewish and three Muslim plaintiffs, as well as two physicians who regularly perform circumcisions. It also includes the Anti-Defamation League and the local chapter of the Jewish Community Relations Council as plaintiffs.

Leticia Preza, one of the plaintiffs in the case, declares of the proposed ban:

It’s a measure that would basically infringe upon my rights as a Muslim to practice here. It would also take away my rights as a parent to choose what’s a good procedure for my child.

Supporters of the ban contend that circumcision is equitable to genital mutilation and conclude that it should not be imposed on children by their parents. They claim the procedure is too painful and dangerous to justify its continued use.

“Parents are really guardians, and guardians have to do what’s in the best interest of the child. It’s his body. It’s his choice,” claimed [Lloyd Schofield](#), the measure’s lead proponent and a longtime San Francisco resident.

The New American’s Daniel Sayani notes dissembling in this assertion, however:



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Yet, this is a position that reeks of [hypocrisy](#), as the same anti-circumcision individuals often support a pro-choice position on abortion, arbitrarily defending a born child's supposed "right" not be circumcised, while supporting the "right" of an individual parent to legally kill their unborn children as late as 36 weeks of pregnancy (approximately nine months of gestation). In fact, San Francisco's permissive culture has been warmly embracing of several abortionists and even late-term abortion practitioners: According to attorney Leonard Moscovitz, "It is amazing that in San Francisco, you can abort a 5, 6, or 7 month old baby, but you soon may not perform a circumcision on a 9 month, 8 day-old baby."

Meanwhile, the ban has provoked a great deal of ire from both the religious and medical communities, as well as from constitutionalists who take issue with the local government's overreach. *The Blaze* indicates:

The ballot measure is running into fierce opposition, especially among Jews and Muslims who consider circumcision a sacred religious rite. They say the ban would violate their constitutional rights and run counter to San Francisco's tradition of cultural and religious tolerance.

International health organizations have promoted male circumcision to help reduce the spread of the AIDS virus, but there hasn't been the same kind of push in the U.S., in part because nearly 80 percent of American men are already circumcised, compared with the worldwide average of 30 percent.

TNA's Sayani noted the number of health benefits associated with circumcision:

There is ample [medical evidence](#) that circumcision is linked to lower rates of penile cancer, thrush infections, balanitis (inflammation of the glans), posthitis and phimosis (two other severe inflammatory conditions), sexual dysfunction, and a reduction in HIV/AIDS and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV, which is linked to sexually-transmitted cervical cancer) transmission rates (in African and other developing societies) as well as improved hygiene.

Plaintiff Jeremy Benjamin voiced his concern over the ban: "As Jews, we take the threat of banning circumcision personally. This measure singles us out, along with the Muslim community, as illegitimate and unwanted in our own city."

The city of Santa Monica was considering a similar ban, until the author of Santa Monica's proposal, Matthew Hess, created an anti-Semitic comic called [Foreskin Man](#). What Hess called a "joke" and "publicity stunt" ultimately revealed what many believed to be an underlying anti-Semitic position behind the circumcision ban. The comic provoked such a public outcry that the city of Santa Monica elected to drop the proposal.

Jena Troutman, who originally submitted the initiative to the Santa Monica city clerk, retracted her proposal, telling the *Jewish Journal*, "It shouldn't have been about religion in the first place. Ninety-five percent of people aren't doing it for religious reasons, and with everyone from the *New York Times* to Glenn Beck focusing on the religious issue, it's closing Americans down to the conversation."

As of now, the circumcision ban in San Francisco is scheduled to appear on the ballot in November. Whether the lawsuit will remove the measure from the ballot remains to be seen.



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