



Written by on October 1, 2008

## California Religious Leaders Oppose Same-sex "Marriage"

The proposition is an initiative measure on the 2008 California General Election ballot that would amend the California Constitution to insert wording stating that "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

Some pastors called for a 40-day fast starting on September 24 and ending on Election Day, November 4. Jim Garlow, the pastor of the evangelical Skyline Wesleyan Church in La Mesa (San Diego County), told the Associated Press that he expected up to 100 young adults to spend over five weeks on his campus, participating in a fast that included only soup and juice, while praying for the passage of Proposition 8 and the preservation of traditional marriage.



"This is not political to us. We see it as very spiritual," said Garlow, a leader of an interfaith coalition that has united to support the marriage initiative. While churches cannot endorse political candidates for fear of endangering their tax-exempt status, they are free to campaign on moral issues without losing their status.

The history behind Proposition 8 and the battle it should finally settle, if passed, goes back to 2000, when voters passed Proposition 22, which rewrote the California Family Code to formally define marriage as being only between a man and a woman. However, on May 15, 2008, the Supreme Court of California overturned the state's ban on same-sex "marriage" with *In re Marriage Cases*, a decision that took effect on June 16.

During the course of 2007 and 2008, four different groups, in probable anticipation of a Supreme Court decision allowing same-sex "marriage," sponsored ballot initiatives to limit marriage to the traditional form. The one that gathered enough signatures to appear on the ballot was titled the "California Marriage Protection Act" by its authors. If passed, the amendment would override the *In re Marriage Cases* ruling.

On June 20, 2008, "gay rights" groups filed suit before the California Supreme Court seeking to remove the initiative from the November ballot, but their lawsuit was dismissed on July 16. However state Attorney General Jerry Brown changed the title of the Proposition 8 initiative from "Limit on Marriage" to "Eliminates the Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry." The amendment's proponents challenged the name change in a lawsuit, but on August 8, Superior Court Judge Timothy Frawley dismissed their suit, ruling that "the attorney general did not abuse his discretion in concluding that the chief purpose and effect of the initiative is to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry."

Among the faith-based organizations supporting Proposition 8 are evangelical Christian groups such as Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council, as well as the leaders of Catholic, Mormon,



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Southern Baptist, Orthodox Jewish, and Seventh-Day Adventist congregations.

The Knights of Columbus, a fraternal organization composed of Catholic laymen, has given nearly \$1.3 million to the cause, making it the largest single contributor to "Yes on 8." And information posted on the Mormonsfor8.com website states that individual Mormons have donated more than \$6.4 million of the \$17.3 million raised in support of passing Proposition 8.

The California Conference of Catholic Bishops has provided Sunday bulletin inserts about Proposition 8 to the state's 1,600 Catholic parishes .

"This Supreme Court decision was a huge wake-up call for Catholics. It was shocking," said Bill May, chairman of Catholics for ProtectMarriage.com. "The sense is that this is the last chance to restore the definition of marriage, and if unsuccessful, it is going to have serious ramifications for California and across the country."

On June 20, 2008, the First Presidency of the LDS (Mormon) Church distributed a letter about "Preserving Traditional Marriage and Strengthening Families," seeking support for the initiative that was read to some 740,000 church members. It read, in part: "The church's teachings and position on this moral issue are unequivocal. Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained by God," Mormon leaders also urged members to donate their "means and time" in support of the amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage.

Rev. Donald Wildmon, the head of the evangelical American Family Association (AFA), has issued a dire warning about the importance of Proposition 8: "If we lose California, if they defeat the marriage amendment, I'm afraid that the culture war is over and Christians have lost. I've never said that publicly until now — but that's just the reality of the fact."



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