

## LDS Church backs proposed California 'one man-one woman' marriage amendment

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On the 39th anniversary of New York City's Stonewall Riots, which arguably launched the gay rights movement, the LDS Church is asking California Mormons to support a proposed constitutional amendment that would recognize only marriages between a man and a woman.

In a statement to be read in California churches Sunday, LDS President Thomas S. Monson, with his counselors in the governing First Presidency, Henry B. Eyring and Dieter F. Uchtdorf, say Mormon teachings on the issue "are unequivocal."

"Marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God, and the formation of families is central to the Creator's plan for his children," the statement says.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will participate with a "broad-based coalition of churches and other organizations" to promote the amendment, which will be on the Nov. 8 ballot.

"Do all you can to support the proposed constitutional amendment by donating of your means and time," the statement says.

Church spokesman Scott Trotter confirmed the authenticity of the statement published Saturday on the Internet, but declined to comment further.

"We are disappointed," said Dave Melson, assistant executive director of Affirmation, a support and advocacy group for Mormon gays, lesbians and their families that has about 2,000 members. "We had hoped the church would back off and stay on the sidelines of this one."

Current California law deals only with civil marriage. It does not affect religious rites or institutions.

"This initiative will hurt so many people," added Olin Thomas, Affirmation's executive director. "Without [gay] marriage, a couple who have been together 30 years could be torn apart at the doorway to the emergency room."

Melson and Thomas will meet with Fred Riley of LDS Family Services and Harold Brown of LDS Social Services on Aug. 11 to discuss the church's political and religious approach to homosexuality.

The LDS Church has been involved in the California effort to promote traditional marriage since 1998, when it spent \$1.1 million to defeat proposals in Hawaii and Alaska. At the same time, LDS leaders in California urged members to support Proposition 22, a law that defined marriage as between a man and a woman.

"We were asked to canvass neighbors, go door to door with the petition and ask for support," Russell Frandsen, a Latter-day Saint in southern California, told The Salt Lake Tribune in March. "A large number of us volunteered to do that. I suppose most of us did it out of a sense of responsibility."

Soon after Proposition 22 passed, the California legislature passed a domestic partnership bill that granted all the rights of marriage through civil unions.

Earlier this year, the LDS Church joined with several California religious groups, including the California Catholic Conference, National Association of Evangelicals, and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, to file a friend-of-the-court brief in defense of Proposition 22,

Opponents had challenged the law's constitutionality and last month the California Supreme Court sided with them. It struck down the initiative and related California law in a 4-3 decision, giving same-sex couples the right to marry.

In 2006, the LDS Church joined a national religious coalition to push an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would define marriage as between a man and a woman. LDS Apostle Russell M. Nelson was among 50 prominent Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish leaders who signed a petition explaining why they see a

need for such a constitutional amendment.

"We are convinced that this is the only measure that will adequately protect marriage from those who would circumvent the legislative process and force a redefinition of it on the whole of our society," reads the petition.

A similar effort failed in 2004, but it did generate significant opposition to same-sex marriage that helped bring many conservative voters to the polls in some pivotal states in 2004. That same year, Utah amended its own constitution to define marriage as the legal union between a man and a woman - a move the LDS Church endorsed. The church has issued two previous statements in support of a constitutional amendment on marriage, and its position is clearly laid out in the 1994 document, "The Family: A Proclamation to the World."

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