

LDS Contribute Millions to Anti-Gay Amendment



Written by JoSelle Vanderhooft

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Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from California have donated nearly \$4.5 million to a campaign to ban gay marriage in the state.

The figures were collected by the group Mormons for Proposition 8, a group dedicated to providing readers with “as much information about the LDS church’s involvement in supporting California’s Proposition 8 as it can gather,” according to its Web site mormonsfor8.com. Californians will vote on the proposition, a constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union between a man and a woman, in November.

The California Supreme court ruled the state’s ban on gay marriage unconstitutional on May 16. Voters passed that particular ban in a controversial 2000 referendum known as Proposition 22 and more popularly as the Knight Initiative after its author, then Sen. William Knight. Mormons around the country contributed millions of dollars to campaigns to pass this proposition. This June, church leadership issued a letter asking California’s more than 770,000 Mormons to “do all [they] can” to support Proposition 8. LDS bishops across the state read the letter aloud during Sunday services.

Mormonsfor8.com tracked donations of over \$1,000 by contributor name, city, state, date of donation and membership in the Mormon Church. A frequently updated spread sheet on the Web site listed over 1,200 Mormons contributors (some donating as much as \$100,000) whose money made up 29% of the estimated \$15,869,613 supporters of Proposition 8 have raised. The site’s maintainers update the spreadsheet nightly.

A handful of Mormons from other mostly Western states – including Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Texas and Utah – have also contributed sizeable donations. Some areas have yet to turn in their figures, however, and site organizers have not yet tallied or listed many smaller donations.

Nadine Hansen, MormonsFor8.com’s maintainer, told the Daily Herald that she estimates “probably 80 percent of the money” donated to the proposition will come from individual Mormons by November.

Hansen also said that she has used a variety of means to discover the LDS membership of donors, including examining blogs and talking to donors’ neighbors.

“We didn’t know what kind of information we were going to get,” she said. “But we seem to be getting some very honest information from people.”

Hansen, a member of the LDS Church who lives in Utah, declined to say whether she supports Proposition 8, stating that her Web site was “neutral” territory in the gay marriage debate.

“We’ve had people from both sides think we are on the opposite side they are on,” she said.

Hansen’s site includes links to gay Mormon support group Affirmation and the No on Proposition 8 campaign as well as pro-initiative groups ProtectMarriage. It also includes links to the California Secretary of State’s Web site that list large and small donations for 2000’s Proposition 22 by name, date and amount.

Jennifer Kerns, the spokeswoman for ProtectMarriage, told the Daily Herald that while the LDS Church has lent significant support to the proposition, ProtectMarriage does not track donors’ religions. She added, however, that “a good portion” of the group’s 25,000 canvassing volunteers were Mormons.

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