



Breaking News: CA Prop. 8 Opponents Speak to Central Voice

By Frank Pizzoli
Central Voice
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As they piled into a big car on their way to the press conference, Central Voice spoke with representatives of the National Religious Leadership Roundtable, convened by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. They were on their way to announce that more than 2,200 faith leaders from across the country have expressed their support for the freedom to marry in an open letter.

There group's efforts are in opposition to California's Proposition 8, a measure that would at eliminate the fundamental right of same-sex couples to marry. Californians will vote Nov. 4 on the initiative.

"The Episcopal Church demands that we speak publicly against discrimination," says Rev. Jay Johnson, a Bay Area priest. His regional Episcopate stands in opposition to Proposition 8. "It's a matter of fairness, love and compassion that we fight for the rights of others to marry and make commitments to the ones they love," he says.

United Church of Christ minister Rebecca Voelkel says "It's important that people know there are many religious leaders and members of congregations that support the right of gay and lesbian individuals to marry." A core belief of her religious tradition calls for speaking out against "false witness," a reference she makes to the untruths told by proponents, many of them also religious leaders, of Proposition 8.

"Allowing gay marriage will not limit the religious freedoms of another person," Voelkel points out. Laws designed to legally recognize same-sex marriages do not require that religious organizations change their practices. Some churches recognize and perform gay marriages, other do not. Gay marriage laws simply recognize the relationship as legal and abiding. Religious opponents of gay marriage often erroneously claim otherwise.

Pagan priest Patricia Kevenafila, a Wiccan priest, says that historically pagan healers in communities were also, like their modern day mainstream religious counterparts, called upon to fight for social justice issues. "The pagan tradition comes from the term 'rural dweller' and members of the community looked to us as healers," she says.

National PFLAG representative (Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays) Jamie Curtis says "We feeling strongly as an ally of the community that we need to show our support for gay marriage and our opposition to Proposition 8."