

Pastors urge rejection of anti-gay Calif. amendment

By 365gay Newscenter Staff
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(San Francisco, California) **More than a dozen pastors Monday stood on the steps of San Francisco City Hall, where the fight for same-sex marriage in California began four years ago, to urge Californians to reject a ballot measure that would make gay marriage illegal.**

They also announced that more than 2,200 faith leaders from across the country have signed an open letter to religious leaders calling for the recognition of same-sex marriage.

Among those taking part in the event organized by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, were the Rev. Bishop Mark Holmerud of the Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; the Rev. Rick Schlosser, Executive Director of the California Council of Churches; the Rev. Mary Susan Gast, Conference Minister of the Northern California Nevada Conference, United Church of Christ; the Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus, Episcopal Bishop of California; and the Rev. Lindi Ramsden, Executive Director of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry.

The presence of the high profile clergy was meant to dispel attempts by evangelical Christians, the Roman Catholic Church and Mormons that people of faith support the proposed amendment.

On Friday, a group of Mormons who support gay marriage delivered protest letters and bundles of carnations to church headquarters in Salt Lake City in an appeal to end the church's support of the ballot initiative in California.

The group, called Sign for Something, disagrees with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' opposition to gay marriage and its efforts to boost Mormon involvement before the Nov. 4 election.

In 2004 Newsom began allowing marriage licenses to be issued to same-sex couples in San Francisco. The state took the mayor to court arguing he had overstepped his authority and the California Supreme Court agreed. As a result the more than 8,000 marriages that had been performed were declared void.

The ruling, however, did not directly address the issue of the constitutionality of the state ban on same-sex marriage and LGBT civil rights activists began a separate court action challenging the prohibition.

In May, the court ruled that denying same-sex couples the right to wed violated the California constitution.

Conservative groups began collecting enough signatures for the ballot measure. Recent polling suggests voters are closely divided over the amendment.

Both sides in the ballot measure have collected millions of dollars to fund media campaigns.

Talk show host Ellen DeGeneres has bought \$100,000 of television airtime to urge Californians to vote against the proposed amendment.

DeGeneres married her long time partner, actress Portia de Rossi, in August.

"Hi, I'm Ellen DeGeneres. I got to do something this year I never thought I'd ever be able to do: I

got married. It was the happiest day of my life. There are people out there raising millions of dollars to try and take that right away from me," DeGeneres says in the commercials to be aired throughout California..

"You've seen their ads on TV. They're twisting the truth, and they're trying to scare you. I believe in fairness. I believe in compassion. I believe in equality for all people. Proposition 8 does not. Please, please, vote no on Prop. 8," she says in the spot.