

# Mormon supporters of gay unions take to cyberspace

By JENNIFER DOBNER – 2 hours ago

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Prompted by their church's support for a California initiative to ban gay marriage, some Mormons are voicing opposition to the proposed ban on the Internet — saying in cyberspace what they might not be able to express in church buildings.

"We need a place where people can have a discussion and get information," said Laura Compton, a contributor at MormonsforMarriage.com. "And people need to know that it's not coming from an anti-Mormon place, or a gay Castro district place. It's coming from a faithful place."

MormonsforMarriage is one of a handful of Web sites to spring up since June, when top Mormon leaders distributed a letter to be read from California pulpits to call the faith's 750,000-plus members there to contribute money and time to help pass Proposition 8.

The Nov. 4 ballot initiative would amend California's constitution to recognize marriage as only between a man and a woman. A state Supreme Court ruling in May legalized marriage for gay men and women.

"When I heard and saw the letter that the church leaders had read in sacrament meetings, I was appalled," said Carolyn Ball, a lesbian who was excommunicated in 2002 for refusing to choose the church over her partner. "So I said, 'That's it.' I want Mormons to know that there are gay people in their congregations, every Sunday."

In an interview on [ldshomosexuality.com](http://ldshomosexuality.com), Ball, who taught at the church-owned Brigham Young University and its Missionary Training Center, recalls two failed marriages to men and a series of humiliating conversations with her local church leaders.

"I really just want people to try and understand and see the pain they are causing gay members of the church who are struggling," said Ball, 44, who now teaches at William Woods University in Fulton, Mo.

Besides personal stories and comments, most of the pro-gay marriage sites include statements that outline the principles that have fostered their support of gay unions. Contributors stress that they consider themselves to be faithful Mormons.

Lds4gaymarriage.org quotes legal decisions and LDS scripture from the Doctrine & Covenants, which states that religious freedom doesn't "provide license to infringe or impose upon the rights and liberties of others."

Mormons are taught that gay sex is a sin, but celibate gays can remain active in the church.

Church leaders see marriage as a moral issue and since the 1990s have been active in efforts to defeat gay marriage legislation nationwide. In 2000, church members supported and helped pass California Proposition 22, which prohibited state recognition of same-sex unions that were legal elsewhere.

Back then there was no place for a Mormon with liberal leanings about marriage to turn.

"If there would have been a site like this, it would have been really helpful," said Lisa Fahey, a San Francisco graphic designer and MormonsforMarriage contributor.

"Last time, during Prop. 22, all I did was vote no. This time I wanted to stand up and be heard ... even though it's hard," she said. "There is a lot of anxiety and stress over being conflicted, being an active Mormon and being for gay marriage."

Compton, a lifetime church member and mother of two from Cupertino, Calif., believes some Mormons fear voicing opinions that contradict church leaders and lead to them being ostracized in their congregations, called wards.

"That's part of the reason we wanted to do the site," said the mother of two from Cupertino, Calif. "... If you think you are the only person in your ward that feels that way and the rhetoric is really loud, it's painful."

In an e-mail, site managers at [lds4gaymarriage](http://www.lds4gaymarriage.org) declined to be identified for this story, saying no one was willing to give their names "because of the fear of retribution by the church."

Kim Farah, a spokeswoman for the 13 million-member Salt Lake City-based church, said church leaders are satisfied that a majority of members understand the teachings that surround the gay marriage issue and overwhelmingly support Proposition 8.

"The Church, of course, recognizes and accepts that some among its very large membership may view the issue differently," Farah said in a statement. But members who engage in clear opposition to church doctrine may cause local leaders to consider church disciplinary action, Farah said.

On the Net:

- <http://www.lds.org>
- <http://www.MormonsforMarriage.com>
- <http://www.ldshomosexuality.com>
- <http://www.lds4gaymarriage.org>