

Lambda Legal and Equality for All:



“Hi, do you support the freedom to—”

“Running late. Sorry!”

Ok, more assertive this time. Don't forget to smile!

“Hi, do you support the freedom to marry for gay and lesbian couples?”

They smiled. Bingo!

In the early months of spring, marriage equality in California was on the horizon, but so were assaults from antigay forces. We knew our opponents were planning something: since the beginning of the year, we had seen an increase of funds flowing into their coffers. By mid-February, our worst fear had been confirmed: The opposition had hired paid signature-gatherers to drum up support for getting what would later be known as Prop 8 on the ballot — which would change the California constitution to ban marriage for same-sex couples in California.

As attorneys from Lambda Legal, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the ACLU and the City of San Francisco prepared for oral arguments in the California Supreme Court case for marriage equality, community education and grassroots organizing were also underway. A statewide coalition called Equality for All was organizing a strategy to defeat any possible antigay ballot initiative, and at Lambda Legal we were doing our part to help.

TARGET, WALMART, AND SUPERMARKETS, OH MY!

The opposition needed about 700,000 valid signatures (8 percent of the votes cast in the last governor's race) by April 18 to get their anti-marriage equality proposition on the November ballot.

We did not wait to see if they would eventually reach their number (They did!). We did not wait to see if we would win the California marriage case (We did!). We hit the pavement — well, actually, the shopping centers. With Equality for All's “Decline to Sign” campaign, we visited fertile grounds of signature-

gathering: Target, WalMart and super markets. We urged shoppers not to sign the antigay petition that was being promoted at these same shopping centers by our opposition. We asked them instead to identify themselves as marriage equality supporters.

While we were unable to keep Prop 8 off the ballot, the first months of intense organizing and mobilizing were crucial. We would not be as prepared as we are today if we hadn't started early. We identified supporters in decisive swing areas, all the while building and growing our base of volunteers.

Many thousands of identified marriage-equality supporters and volunteer-shift hours later, here we are, in the middle of one of our greatest political struggles.

A FATEFUL FALL

Lambda Legal played an important part in winning marriage equality in California. Now, we're a part of protecting that victory.

In addition to being on the winning legal team, we have been involved in the media strategy and extensive field effort. But now it is everybody's turn to play a part. We cannot win the fight against Prop 8 in November without you!

Like the freedom of religion and freedom of speech, the freedom to marry is fundamental to our society. No one can tell you which church to attend or which books to read. And no one should be able to tell adults that they cannot marry the person they love simply because that person is of the same sex.

We cannot afford to lose this fight. We would not only be losing the freedom to marry for thousands of Californians and those that come to the state to marry, but we would also be losing the security, dignity and respect that the California constitution guarantees. It's about equality and fairness. And it matters to all people who believe in equality and fairness, no matter where you live or whom you love.

Here is how you can help. It's simple. No matter where you live, the campaign to defeat Prop 8 in California needs your financial support and your time. If you live in California, we need your vote.

1. Estimates on the final costs of this campaign are in the millions. California is a large state; it takes large resources to reach the voters we need. Please give generously to the campaign.
2. Equality For All is working to identify thousands of voters to support marriage equality in order to win. Help us achieve that goal: Sign up to work with the phone bank or call family and friends who live in California. It's still not too late to make a difference.
3. If you can vote in California, register and vote for freedom, dignity and equality — register now and then VOTE NO on Prop 8. Even if you do not plan to get married today, tomorrow, or ever — support fairness and equality for all.

Go to www.equalityforall.com and sign up to donate and volunteer, and don't forget to register and VOTE NO on Prop 8.