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## **AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR EQUAL RIGHTS BOARD ANNOUNCED; GROUP LAUNCHED FEDERAL CHALLENGE TO PROP. 8**

*Foundation Brought Together Ted Olson & David Boies, who Argued Bush v. Gore on Opposite Sides, to Strike Down Prop. 8 in Federal Suit Announced Last Week*

EDS: Complete background and announcement video at: [www.equalrightsfoundation.org](http://www.equalrightsfoundation.org)

LOS ANGELES – The American Foundation for Equal Rights announced its founding Board of Directors today. The Foundation is the organization that hired Ted Olson and David Boies to lead a federal challenge to Proposition 8 that was announced last week. Proposition 8 eliminated the right of same-sex couples to marry in California. The suit states that Proposition 8 creates a class of “second-class citizens” and thereby violates the U.S. Constitution. The suit also calls for an injunction against Proposition 8 until the case is resolved, which would immediately reinstate marriage rights to same-sex couples.

“This unequal treatment of gays and lesbians denies them the basic liberties and equal protection under the law that are guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution,” the suit states.

“Our government should treat every American equally,” Board President Chad Griffin said. “The American Foundation for Equal Rights will support efforts to ensure every American’s Constitutional rights are protected.”

The Board members are:

- Chad Griffin
- Rob Reiner
- Michelle Reiner
- Bruce Cohen
- Kristina Schake
- Dustin Lance Black

**Chad Griffin, Board President**

Chad Griffin, founding partner of political and communications strategy firm Griffin|Schake, has spent his career taking on the toughest fights against the most entrenched, well-financed interests like Big Tobacco, Big Oil and the right wing to shape the policy debate around some of the nation's most important issues, including equal rights, clean energy, universal health care, stem cell research, and early childhood education. Griffin led the largest ballot initiative ever recorded, Proposition 87: California's Clean Alternative Energy Initiative; Proposition 10, which generates \$600 million a year to early childhood education; and Proposition 71, which secured billions of dollars for stem cell research despite the Bush Administration ban. Griffin's fundraising and strategic counsel in the final weeks of the campaign to oppose Proposition 8 earned him selection as one of "The Advocate's" 2008 People of the Year. A veteran of the Clinton White House communications team, Griffin was the youngest staffer ever to serve in the West Wing. He is an executive producer of the recently released Kirby Dick film "Outrage."

**Rob Reiner, Board Member**

Actor and Director Rob Reiner has been a leader in elevating the issue of pre Kindergarten education and other services for children ages 0 to 5. He chaired the campaign to pass Prop. 10, the California Children and Families Initiative, and chaired from 1999-2006 First 5 California, the state agency responsible for allocating \$600 million a year for health, education and other services for young children and parents. He recently played a key role in defeating Prop. 1D, which would have gutted critical programs for California children. Reiner has also championed open space preservation, alternative energy and has played active roles in a number of campaigns. Reiner is one of the nation's most accomplished actors and directors, including his Emmy Award-winning role in "All in the Family" and directing "This is Spinal Tap," "Stand by Me," "The Princess Bride," "When Harry Met Sally," "Misery," "A Few Good Men," "The American President," "Rumor Has It," and "The Bucket List."

**Michele Singer Reiner, Board Member**

An accomplished photographer, producer, and children's advocate, Reiner co-founded Parents' Action for Children (formerly the I Am Your Child Foundation). She produced the prime-time ABC special "I Am Your Child" and worked with Newsweek magazine to produce a special parenting issue dedicated to early-childhood issues. Other credits include a series of nationally distributed videos that have helped educate thousands of parents, caregivers and professionals on topics relating to early childhood development. These films were produced in English and Spanish and are given to every birth mother in the state of California. She has also produced numerous public service announcements featuring Meg Ryan, Bruce Willis, Michelle Pfeiffer and Jennifer Aniston, among others, and directed a series of advertisements for Gold Star Families for Peace, an organization comprising families of service-members killed in action.

**Bruce Cohen, Board Member**

Bruce Cohen and his producing partner Dan Jinks produced the Academy Award-winning film "MILK" and won the Academy Award for Best Picture for producing

“American Beauty.” Their work also includes “Down With Love,” “Big Fish,” “The Forgotten,” “The Nines” and the Emmy-winning television series “Pushing Daisies.” Cohen served on the National Finance Committee of Hillary for President, the National LGBT Steering Committee of Obama for America and was Chair of the LA Finance Committee for NO ON 8. Cohen is a member of ANGLE, a Los Angeles-based LGBT political organization, and is the recipient of numerous awards for his work for equal rights. A Yale graduate, Cohen has also served on the Board of Governors of the Producers Guild of America since 2002 and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Producer’s Council since 2007. In May 2008, Cohen and his husband, Gabe Catone, were the first LGBT couple to be married by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa.

**Kristina Schake, Board Member**

Kristina Schake, founding partner of political and communications strategy firm Griffin|Schake, has directed communications and media campaigns for some of the nation’s most prominent changemaking individuals, organizations, campaigns and events. She is currently the chief communications strategist for California First Lady Maria Shriver and The Women’s Conference, the nation’s premier forum for women, along with being a top advisor to the U.S. Green Building Council and The California Endowment, California’s largest healthcare foundation. Her experience includes serving as Global Communications Director for the Live Earth concert series in 2007, along with acting as the first Communications Director of the California Children and Families Commission and as Executive Director of the I Am Your Child foundation.

**Dustin Lance Black, Board Member**

Lance Black is an award winning screenwriter, director, and producer. He won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for “MILK” and was a writer and executive producer of the television series “Big Love.” Gus Van Sant is slated to direct his film adaptation of Tom Wolfe’s “The Electric Kool Aid Acid Test.” Black is a noted equal rights advocate, and was a leading opponent of Proposition 8 during the 2008 election. He was named by The Advocate magazine as one of its top “Forty Under 40.”

The plaintiffs in the case are Kris Perry & Sandy Stier, and Paul Katami & Jeff Zarrillo. They have issued the following joint statement: “We and our relationships should be treated equally under the law. Our goal is to advance the cause of equality for all Americans, which is the promise that makes this nation so great.”

The plaintiffs wish to be married but, because of Proposition 8, have been denied marriage licenses. Olson, a former U.S. Solicitor General, represented George W. Bush in 2000’s Bush v. Gore, which decided the presidential election. Boies represented Al Gore in that case. Olson, widely regarded as one of the nation’s preeminent constitutional lawyers, has argued 55 cases in the U.S. Supreme Court. Boies ranks as one of the leading trial lawyers of his generation, having secured landmark victories for clients in numerous areas of the law. This is the first time they have served alongside each other as co-counsel. The case was filed May 22 in the United States District Court, Northern District of California.

In May 2008, the California Supreme Court ruled that the state's law prohibiting same-sex marriage was unconstitutional under the privacy, due process and equal protection guarantees of the California Constitution. Proposition 8 was passed in November 2008 to amend the California Constitution to eliminate the equal rights it guaranteed to same-sex couples. On May 26, the California Supreme Court upheld Proposition 8 as a valid amendment to the State's Constitution.

The lawsuit argues that the California's Constitution -- as amended by Proposition 8 -- violates the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution, a provision with which all state laws must comply. Relegating gays and lesbians to "separate but unequal" domestic partnerships violates the U.S. Constitution, the suit states.

"More than 30 years ago, the United States Supreme Court recognized that marriage is one of the basic rights of man," the suit states, referring to the Court's decision in *Loving v. Virginia*, which struck down bans on interracial marriage.

According to the suit, Proposition 8:

- Violates the Due Process Clause by impinging on fundamental liberties.
- Violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.
- Singles out gays and lesbians for a disfavored legal status, thereby creating a category of "second-class citizens."
- Discriminates on the basis of gender.
- Discriminates on the basis of sexual orientation.

Kris Perry and Sandy Stier have been together for 9 years and are the parents of four boys. Perry is Executive Director of First 5 California, a state agency that promotes education and health for children under five. She holds a BA from UC Santa Cruz and an MSW from San Francisco State University. Stier is Information Technology Director for the Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services Agency. She is originally from Iowa and is a graduate of the University of Iowa. Perry and Stier first tried to marry in 2004, after the City of San Francisco began issuing licenses. They live in Berkeley, CA.

Paul Katami and Jeff Zarrillo have been together for 8 years. Katami is a fitness expert and business owner who graduated from Santa Clara University before receiving his graduate degree from UCLA. Zarrillo is the General Manager of a theater exhibition company. A native of New Jersey, Zarrillo graduated from Montclair State University. Having wanted to marry each other for more than two years, they considered options including traveling to other states for a "civil union," but felt any alternative fell short of marriage. They live in Burbank, CA.

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*The newly created American Foundation for Equal Rights is dedicated to protecting and advancing equal rights for every American. For more information, visit [www.equalrightsfoundation.org](http://www.equalrightsfoundation.org).*