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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Prominent California Women's Rights Organizations Ask State Supreme Court to Say No to Prop. 8

*California Women's Law Center and Equal Rights Advocates Warn Against Consequences of Putting Equality Up to a Public Vote*

LOS ANGELES (Nov. 17, 2008) – Equal Rights Advocates and the California Women's Law Center today filed a writ petition (#S168302) with the California Supreme Court, asking that it invalidate Proposition 8 because of its potentially disastrous implications for women and other groups that face discrimination.

In papers filed with the California Supreme Court this morning, the two organizations argue that Proposition 8 drastically alters the equal protection guarantee in California's Constitution, and that such drastic changes cannot legally be made through a simple majority vote. They argue that such changes require a two-thirds vote of the legislature before being submitted to the voters.

“There was a time when women couldn't own property, couldn't vote, and were excluded from equal opportunities in education. If these had been up for a public vote we still might not have them,” said Irma D. Herrera, Executive Director of Equal Rights Advocates. “Our constitution protects women and minorities from having our basic civil rights stripped away so easily as they could be with Proposition 8. For the Constitution to have any meaning, core principles such as equal protection can't be up for grabs in every election.”

In May of 2008, the California Supreme Court held that same-sex couples must be allowed to marry because the California Constitution provides the same equal treatment protections to lesbian and gay people as are provided to other minority groups. Proposition 8, an initiative on California ballots earlier this month's, would eliminate that right.

“Proposition 8 opens the door wide-open for future majorities to change the Constitution to deny equal treatment to any group they don’t like,” said Katie Buckland, Executive Director of the California Women’s Law Center. “If Proposition 8 is allowed to stand, the equal protection guarantee of our state Constitution will be practically meaningless, promising only that minorities are protected from unfair majority intrusion until the majority says otherwise.”

The writ petition from the two women’s groups come on the same day as another filed by the California Council of Churches and a variety of other faith-based organizations, as well as a petition filed Friday by a group of civil rights organizations that includes the California State Conference of the NAACP, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the Equal Justice Society, and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. All of these, as well as an earlier lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, Lambda Legal and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, argue that Proposition 8’s revision to the California Constitution could not be enacted by a simple majority vote.

A copy of the writ petition filed today is available at [www.cwlc.org](http://www.cwlc.org) and [www.equalrights.org](http://www.equalrights.org). The women’s groups are represented on a pro bono basis by Laura W. Brill, Moez M. Kaba, Richard M. Simon, and Mark A. Kressle of Irell & Manella LLP,

**Equal Rights Advocates** has led the legal fight for women’s equality for more than 30 years. Since 1974, ERA’s mission has been to protect and secure equal rights and economic opportunities for women and girls through litigation and advocacy.

Since its founding in 1989, the **California Women's Law Center** has served as a unique advocate in California, working in collaboration with others to protect, secure and advance the comprehensive civil rights of women and girls. CWLC programs are designed to empower individuals to use the law that governs their rights and to address the legal issues that perpetuate the growing poverty among women and children.