

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### NEW, STATEWIDE PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN UTAH UNITES FOR MARRIAGE IS LAUNCHED

**SALT LAKE CITY, Tuesday, March 18** — A trio of prominent Utahns, a coalition of community and national partners, and everyday supporters today launched Utah Unites For Marriage. The public education campaign aims to broaden the marriage conversation across the state, showcase the diversity of Utahns who support marriage equality, and send the message that now is the time to allow everyone to marry the person they love.

“The people of Utah understand the joy of marriage, and that is a joy that should be shared by all citizens of this state,” said Utah Unites For Marriage Co-Chair and former long-time TV anchor Terry Wood, speaking at the Salt Lake County South Building, a place that holds special significance following hundreds of weddings that occurred there over 16 days after the Dec. 20 ruling in *Kitchen v. Herbert*. That successful federal challenge to the state’s marriage ban is on appeal and the decision has been stayed pending a final resolution.

Wood’s fellow co-chairs are former U.S. Attorney for the District of Utah Brett Tolman and Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker. Coalition partners include the Utah Pride Center, Equality Utah, Human Rights Campaign (HRC), Freedom to Marry (FTM), ACLU of Utah, and the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR).

Utah Unites For Marriage was founded in the wake of the state’s announcement that it would appeal the marriage victory in *Kitchen v. Herbert*, which led to nearly 1,300 same-sex weddings in just over two weeks — legal unions that are now in limbo. *Kitchen v. Herbert* heads to the United States Court of Appeals in the 10<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court on April 10.

Recent polls show a rapid shift in Americans’ support for same-sex marriage. A Washington Post/ABC News poll (<http://wapo.st/1ibuStk>) released this month found an all-time-high 59 percent of Americans are now in favor of allowing same-sex couples to marry. And in a sign that support is increasing even across party lines, a recent New York Times/CBS News poll (<http://nyti.ms/1fJMrOq>) found that 56 percent of Republicans under the age of 45 support marriage equality.

“Marriage is a commitment of love between two people, and all people should have the right to make that commitment without a government telling them who they can or cannot marry,” said Co-Chair Terry Wood. “I stand with my fellow Utahns for marriage

equality because it is right — right for my son and his husband who have been married for five years and right for the hundreds of Utahns who married when a brief window was opened in December.”

“For me, it’s not enough to just stand on the right side of marriage equality, I must have a voice in the conversation,” said Co-Chair Brett Tolman. “I am proud to help lead the discussion and legal movement that will help those like my sister Dayna and her partner of more than 20 years, Tammy, and all couples across the country achieve marriage equality.”

“This effort reflects a battle for civil rights on behalf of all our residents and a call to end the days of ignorance and separate treatment,” said Co-Chair and Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker. “What is happening in Utah is happening everywhere else — a deeper reflection on what we share instead of what our differences are. Why should we, as a state, continue to deny the protections and responsibilities of marriage? The time for change is most assuredly now.”

Also on hand to officially launch Utah Unites for Marriage were Derek Kitchen and Moudi Sbeity of Salt Lake City, two of six plaintiffs in *Kitchen v. Herbert*.

“No loving couple should be barred from the joys and responsibilities of marriage simply because they are lesbian or gay,” said Derek Kitchen. “Since filing the lawsuit, we have been overwhelmed by the flood of support from so many people throughout our community and across the country, including many of our Mormon family and friends.”

“The time has come to offer all Utah couples equal access to marriage,” said Utah Pride Center President John Netto. “Utah Unites For Marriage will work tirelessly to spread this important message by sharing stories, starting conversations and promoting equality in every corner of our state.”

“Across the nation and across the state of Utah, people are engaging in this important conversation,” said Brandie Balken, executive director of Equality Utah. “While the case works its way through the courts, we have the opportunity to participate in respectful, honest dialogue and explore the real, human side of the issue. After all, this isn’t just about a legal case — it’s about Utahns, about families, and about our community.”

“The ACLU of Utah is excited to be a partner in this campaign,” said Karen McCreary, executive director. “It provides a wonderful way to share the stories of loving and committed same-sex couples and their families and friends with other Utahns across the state. These stories make clear why marriage matters in so many legal, emotional and practical ways.”

To learn more about Utah Unites For Marriage, please visit:

Website: <http://utunites.org>

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/UtahUnites>  
Twitter: <http://twitter.com/UT4Marriage>  
Pledge: <http://utunites.org/sign>

### **Co-Chair Bios:**

**Terry Wood** is a multi-Emmy Award-winning TV reporter who has anchored the news on three of Utah's four major stations: KUTV2, KSL and ABC4. A familiar face to Utahns of all ages, he has reported from dangerous places across the globe and was even arrested as a spy twice while on-assignment — charges that were, of course, dropped. He is known for standing up for his beliefs, and particularly for taking a stand on-air during the Divine Strake controversy.

**Brett Tolman** served as U.S. Attorney for the District of Utah from 2006-2009. Prior to that, he worked as legal counsel for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee. In 2013, Tolman co-wrote an amicus brief on behalf of the Utah Pride Center and 25 statewide equality organizations for the two marriage equality cases that reached the Supreme Court, *Hollingsworth v. Perry* (Proposition 8) and *U.S. v. Windsor* (Defense of Marriage Act). In the Perry case, the Court reinstated marriages in California for same-sex couples, and the Windsor case resulted in overturning DOMA, which denied legally married couples access to federal protections and benefits.

**Ralph Becker** is in his second term as mayor of Salt Lake City. In 2009, he signed non-discrimination ordinances into law that forbade landlords and employers from denying housing and jobs based on sexual orientation and gender identity. On Dec. 20, after hearing news of the ruling in *Kitchen v. Herbert*, Mayor Becker headed straight for the Salt Lake County Building, where he officiated the weddings of many same-sex couples. In an op-ed in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Becker described the emotion and significance of that first day of marriage equality: <http://bit.ly/MM10rq>

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