

# **Press Release**

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## **One Common Ground Bill is Pulled, the Other Released**

*Equality Utah makes good-faith move to focus energy where  
common ground is clear.*

Salt Lake City – In the interest of focusing discussions on policies where broad support is evident, Equality Utah and bill sponsor, Rep. Jackie Biskupski, have decided to pull a bill regarding the second clause of Amendment 3 from consideration. A second bill, sponsored by Rep. Jennifer Seelig, is being released in its final form today.

“I believe the second clause of Amendment 3 has been misconstrued by many and will continue to be a stumbling block for reasonable policies in the future,” said Representative Jackie Biskupski. “However, I believe that the other Common Ground bills have broader support and cannot be construed as having anything to do with marriage. By pulling this bill, we hope to make a good-faith effort to demonstrate that the protections we’re talking about have nothing to do with marriage and in no way conflict with Amendment 3.”

Mike Thompson, Equality Utah’s Executive Director, emphasized that the all of the Common Ground bills were modeled directly from the statements of the LDS Church.

“Although Elder Whitney has said that the church does not oppose domestic partnerships or civil unions, we felt that focusing on specific, basic protections would focus the debate on our common ground,” said Thompson.

The language of another Common Ground Initiative bill was released today. Rep Jennifer Seelig’s “Adult Joint Support Declaration” bill was released. Modeled specifically to address three rights the LDS Church said it does not oppose, the bill creates a legal mechanism for

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adults who take responsibility for each other and live together to have hospital visitation, medical decision making and inheritance rights.

In it's November 5<sup>th</sup> statement, the Church said (emphasis added):

*“The Church does not object to rights for same-sex couples regarding **hospitalization and medical care**, fair housing and employment rights, or **probate rights**, so long as these do not infringe on the integrity of the traditional family or the constitutional rights of churches.”*

Seelig's bill allows adults to file “declarations of joint support” with county clerks. These declarations would allow two adults to access the three basic protections listed above, under certain circumstances.

“People who take care of each other shouldn't be denied these basic protections,” said Rep Seelig. “We should allow people who take responsibility for each other to continue to accept that responsibility, instead of having government get into the middle of personal relationships.”

Seelig stressed that the bill is needed to protect the majority of Utahns who can't afford to hire an estate attorney.

“Most people don't have wills or “powers of attorney,” said Seelig. “Those legal documents are expensive to have attorneys create and many can't afford them.”

In a January poll, 83% of Utahns agreed that gay and lesbian Utahns “should be provided some legal protections, such as hospital visitation, health insurance, and inheritance rights.”