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The Washington Times

Leader says Santorum made polygamy sound 'dirty' ✓

Utah sect objects to lumping biblical practice with homosexuality

From combined dispatches

The leader of Utah's largest polygamist sect has objected to Sen. Rick Santorum's comments lumping plural marriage with other practices the senator considers to be antifamily.

Mr. Santorum, Pennsylvania Republican and chairman of the Senate Republican Conference, has been criticized by homosexual interest groups and some Democrats for comparing homosexuality to bigamy, polygamy, incest and adultery.

Owen Allred, 89, head of the United Apostolic Brethren, based in the Salt Lake City suburb of Bluffdale, agreed with Mr. Santorum in part.

"He is absolutely right. The people of the United States are doing whatever they can to do away with the sacred rights of marriage," Mr. Allred told the Salt Lake Tribune.

But Mr. Allred said Mr. Santorum's inclusion of polygamy in his list tarnishes a religious tradition whose roots are traced

to biblical figures such as Abraham, Jacob and Moses, defiling them as "immoral and dirty."

In an interview with the Associated Press conducted April 7 but published during the weekend, Mr. Santorum criticized homosexuality while discussing a pending Supreme Court case concerning a Texas sodomy law.

"If the Supreme Court says that you see SANTORUM, page A9



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have the right to consensual [homosexual] sex within your home, then you have the right to bigamy, you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery. You have the right to anything," Mr. Santorum said.

"Whether it's polygamy, whether it's adultery, where it's sodomy, all of those things are antithetical to a healthy, stable, traditional family," he said.

Speaking at a town hall meeting in Pennsylvania on Wednesday, Mr. Santorum defended his comments and said they were similar to what Justice Byron White wrote in the 1986 Supreme Court ruling that consenting adults have no constitutional right to private homosexual sex.

"To suggest that my comments, which are the law of the land and were the reason the Supreme Court decided the case in 1986, are somehow intolerant, I would just argue that it is not," Mr. Santorum said.

Mr. Santorum is third in his

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party's leadership, behind Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee and Assistant Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. Homosexual-rights groups and some Democrats have suggested that Mr. Santorum be removed from the conference post.

Yesterday, two Republican senators became the first in their party to criticize Mr. Santorum's comments, though they did not call for him to step down from their party's leadership.

Sen. Lincoln Chafee, Rhode Island Republican, said he was "disappointed" in the comments.

"I thought his choice of comparisons was unfortunate and the premise that the right of privacy does not exist just plain wrong," he said in a statement. "Senator Santorum's views are not held by this Republi-

can and many others in our party."

Sen. Olympia J. Snowe, Maine Republican, said Mr. Santorum's comments "undermine Republican principles of inclusion and opportunity."

The White House has not made any statement on the issue, and Mr. Santorum's office did not return a call for comment yesterday.

Polygamy was abandoned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints more than a century ago, and the church excommunicates members who advocate it.

However, it is estimated that tens of thousands in Utah continue the practice.

Membership estimates for Mr. Allred's church range from 4,000 to 6,000, and there also are a number of independent polygamists loosely affiliated with Mr. Allred's group.