After the passage of Proposition 8 in California banning same-sex marriage, an article appeared in the Los Angeles Times describing how the Sacramento theater director felt compelled to resign once his donation in support of the ban was revealed. The Web site for the San Francisco Chronicle (at www.sfgate.com/webdb/prop8) provides free access to a searchable database that provides the following information about contributors: name, occupation, employer, position support, payment type, transaction date, and committee name (in this case ProtectMarriage.com - Yes on 8). In the words of the resigning director: “I am disappointed that my personal convictions have cost me the opportunity to do what I love the most” (at www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-et-quick13-2008nov13,0,7115878story). This story gives pause to people who might wish to support controversial causes in the future, but society has accepted a trade-off between the right to privacy and the need for transparency in election finance. In this case, transparency came at a high personal cost to that theater director.

Stories abound of other people who have also paid a high personal cost stemming from information posted about them on the Internet. This column, however, will look into that subset of individuals who have been harmed by their own postings about themselves. The Internet provides unprecedented opportunities to engage in self-promotion and self-publishing, unfettered by editors and censors. Just look at the eponymous Web sites for Larry Winget or Laura Ingraham; their television and radio celebrity is able to fuel book sales, newsletters, and speaking engagements. Unfortunately for many Web users, this has turned into more of a curse than a blessing. Being unleashed to spout whatever is on one’s mind can result in serious personal, legal, and professional ramifications. This column will focus on self-inflicted damages, where people have volunteered information that has come back to haunt and harm them.

Fired By Facebook And Other Self-Inflicted Damage On The Internet

The January 2008 issue of jobPostings magazine asks “Will the Internet Wreck Your Job Hunt?” It explains that hundreds of students are losing out on potential job offers once their prospective employers search their names on Google. This is pri-