

# McClain: #51 issue is 'discrimination'

By PATRICK SULLIVAN  
Of the Emerald

"When people realize the real issue is discrimination, they'll vote no on No. 51," said Laurie McClain, a lesbian mother who spoke about the ballot measure that, if defeated, would retain Eugene's gay rights amendment.

McClain added that the measure's defeat would "allow me to say, 'Hey, you can't kick me out just because...I'm a lesbian.'"

McClain, Harriet Merrick and Maryanne Johnson, all members of Eugene Citizens for Human Rights (ECHR), discussed the issue as part of the Womenspeak series sponsored by the University WYCA and the ASUO.

Throughout the discussion, the women tried to dispel misconceptions about the measure.

- The measure doesn't condone homosexuality. It only allows persons to show affection toward their own sex without the threat of losing their job or housing.

- There is no "affirmative action clause" in the ordinance that would set up a quota system for the hiring of homosexuals.

- Eugene's ordinance is not unique. More than 40 communities in the United States have measures that bar discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Some misconceptions have been created by the measure's supporters who are trying to repeal Eugene's gay rights amendment, said Johnson, in reference to the campaign by VOICE (Volunteer Organization Involved in Community Enactments).

McClain said the issue deals with more than homosexuality because non-gays are protected by the ordinance as it stands now.

She said without the amendment, a straight male who let a male friend stay overnight in his apartment could be evicted because the landlord viewed the visit as evidence of homosexuality. The denial would not have a legal recourse without the gay rights amendment, she said.

Viewing the ballot measure controversy as a civil rights issue makes it unique, said McClain, because "traditionally, civil rights victories are won in the courts and not at the polls."

"If discrimination against blacks

had gone to a vote we would still have people in the back of the bus," she said.

"Oregon has a reputation for protecting equal rights of minorities...now we have a chance to be the first state to win civil rights in a vote," McClain added.

Regardless of the election's outcome, "we have a growing civil rights movement that won't be stopped...there are a whole lot of people who won't be going back to the closet," attested McClain.

She claimed that 10 percent of Eugene's residents are gay and they represent a "perfect cross section of the community. We are mothers, students, businessmen, children, neighbors, and we pay taxes.

"And we have found in our campaign that when people get to know 'real' gay people, they realize this is not a take-over by commie, pinko perverts."

When the issue goes to a vote on Tuesday, the outcome will be close, said McClain.

"To win we need to get our people out."



Photo by Greg Gawlowski  
Laurie McClain (center), speaks out against #51 during a panel held in the EMU Forum.

## Asbestosis kills 20 years later

PORTLAND (AP) — It was war and everybody worked, especially at the big Kaiser shipyards in Portland and Vancouver, Wash.

The "Liberty Ships" rolled out assembly-line fashion at the rate of two a week. Inside their half-completed hulls, the men and women toiled amid a fine dust of asbestos, which was used as insulation.

Now, 30 years later, many of those 99,000 people who worked in the Kaiser shipyards are having trouble breathing, and some are dying from asbestosis, a disease for which there is no cure.

"It's a time bomb going off 20 years later," said Dr. Miles Edwards, head of the division of chest diseases at the University of Oregon Health Sciences Center.

The disease lingers for 20 years or more, Edwards says, after initial exposure to asbestos. Then it can be detected, but there is no treatment or cure. Breathing gradually becomes more difficult until the patient dies. The illness encourages heart trouble and might turn to cancer, especially if the patient has smoked.

Lon Applegate is business representative of the Asbestos Workers Union Local 36, which has represented asbestos workers in the shipyards since the early 1900s. He estimates that 80 percent of the local's members who died of natural causes in the last decade died from asbestos-related ailments.

The insulation applicators weren't the only ones to be exposed to the deadly particles, Applegate noted. All other workers in the shipyards breathed the dust, and the fibers collected on clothes the workers took home to their families.

Applegate said the use of asbestos as insulation has been phased out over the past seven years, and it is almost never used anymore.

A friend of his, Robert Maguire, died what Applegate called "a horrible, suffocating death" of pulmonary asbestosis seven months ago at the age of 64.

Maguire worked in the Kaiser shipyards for seven and a half years during the 1940s. After that, he applied asbestos insulation to buildings for another 27 years. His widow, Margaret, said her husband knew there were dangers to his trade, but he disregarded them.

"When a fellow's making a pretty good scale, he disregards his health," she said.

Maguire said her son-in-law continues to work in insulation, and worked with asbestos for years. "He's got a pretty good cough right now," she said.

"But he'll stay with it. You know why?" Maguire said. "The money. But you can't spend that money when you're dead."

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