

Drug fine increase also considered

Gay rights bill sparks legislative discussion

By GREG WASSON
Of the Emerald

Gay rights isn't the sexy issue it once was, but it's still a matter of discussion at the Legislature. A number of bills pertinent to gay rights have been introduced, but the most comprehensive is HB 2704, sponsored by about a half-dozen

legislators, including Rep. Margie Hendriksen, D-Eugene.

"This is a comprehensive approach in which civil rights laws relating to real estate, employment and public accommodations are amended to include sexual orientation."

Hendriksen repeats the oft-stated contention that the bill is simply a matter of fair play.

"It's a recognition that people are discriminated against because of their sexual preference. It's saying that every Oregonian should be allowed to work, to buy real estate, receive goods and services without being discriminated against on a non-job, non-performance related criteria."

And, Hendriksen is totally dismayed that voters in places like Eugene have referred and abolished such legislation.

"That's always a possibility. There have been other places where legislation of this type has enacted and not been reversed. If a majority of the people understand these laws and the issues, and understand that this is merely protecting the rights of other Oregonians, it should pass."

However, if Rep. Peg Jolin, D-Cottage Grove, is any indica-

tion, not everybody understands that.

"I have no objection to what somebody does in their own privacy," says Jolin. "However, whenever we deal with this subject matter legislatively, we are dealing with special privileges. In the process, we take away other people's rights."

Asked to enumerate what rights she's talking about, Jolin points to the landlord-tenant relationship. This type of legislation, she contends, gives unwelcome tenants a shield to hide behind when the landlord attempts to evict them for legitimate reasons.

The House Judiciary Committee has been examining gay rights bills as well as drug-related legislation, like the proposal introduced by Rep. Grattan Kerrans, D-Eugene, at the request of Lane County District Attorney

Pat Horton.

The proposal raises the fines for certain drug violations. Horton explains that the bill is necessary because of current enforcement realities.

"With the prison overcrowding, drug violators aren't doing time."

Horton says the situation calls for the present fines, currently limited to \$2,500, to be increased dramatically.

The head of the committee, Rep. Tom Mason, D-Portland, calls Horton's inclusion of marijuana unrealistic.

"I don't think it's applicable to the present social situation. This Legislature and this legislator are not about to legalize marijuana. But we are going to pass laws which reflect society's changing values. Mr. Horton's proposal, I don't think, fits within that category."

Student resurrects University ACLU

By ANN PORTAL
Of the Emerald

In response to the "new wave of conservatism" in Washington, D.C., the American Civil Liberties Union is being resurrected at the University after two years of dormancy.

Student organizer Steve Schneider says he hopes to meet the threat of a repression of civil rights at the federal level by reviving the campus branch of the organization.

"What's happening in Washington is going to transcend what's going to happen in the state," Schneider predicts.

"All the civil rights we've been fighting for during the last several decades are in danger."

Schneider says the campus ACLU will have a dual purpose — providing students with information on basic civil liberty issues and staying informed on ACLU activities in Washington.

Schneider, a University history student and OSPIRG member, already has held three organizational meetings. About 12 students have signed up, he says.

Schneider plans to hold a membership drive during spring term and says he thinks many

students are looking for an organization to address civil rights issues.

The University branch will not be an independent chapter but instead will operate in conjunction with the Lane County chapter, located in the basement of the Wesley Center, Schneider says.

IFC funding will be requested to support a campus office that would allow the ACLU to be "visible on campus" and "provide available access to students," he says.

Schneider, who plans to remain active in OSPIRG until June, says the ACLU office won't duplicate services offered by OSPIRG. OSPIRG is mainly a research group, but the ACLU concentrates on defending civil liberties, he says.

The liberties that ACLU lawyers have fought to preserve include sexual equality, racial justice, religious freedom, the freedom to control one's own body, the constitutional rights of students and the right to privacy.


The ACLU currently is battling increased surveillance by the CIA and FBI, Schneider says.

"It's really crazy what's going on. People are just sitting back and taking it."

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