

# Portland battles to gain protection of gays' rights



PORTLAND (AP) — The City Council faces strong opposition from a conservative group in its efforts to pass an ordinance protecting the rights of homosexuals seeking jobs or housing.

The proposed ordinance was written by City Commissioner Mike Lindberg. A draft already has been signed by Mayor Bud Clark and the other three commissioners on the City Council.

"It's very clear," Lindberg said Monday. "We think people should be judged on their performance and their character, not their sexual orientation."

He said the measure was written after city attorneys studied civil rights ordinances passed in more than 100 U.S. cities to protect homosexuals from discrimination. Portland also needs the ordinance because hate crimes against gays and lesbians have increased, Lindberg said.

The ordinance is opposed by the Oregon Citizens Alliance, led by Lon Mabon. The alliance has proposed amending the Oregon Constitution to declare that homosexuality is abnormal behavior.

"We oppose any effort, no matter at what level, whether it's city council or state, to enshrine homosexual behavior into protected status," Mabon said Monday.

He claims the majority of Oregonians oppose homosexual behavior.

"There should be no special protection for behavior of any

kind," Mabon said. "The particular behavior we're opposing is considered immoral by most people, I believe."

Lindberg said the ordinance has the solid support of the council and he is confident it will be approved.

"The Oregon Citizens Alliance creates more divisiveness in the state, and I think generates more bigotry, at a time when we really need to respect the rights of every individual," Lindberg said.

If the ordinance is approved, Portland would join 107 other cities across the nation that protect the rights of gay men and lesbians.

The ordinance would "prohibit discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, marital status, familial status, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or source of income and provide for enforcement."

Lindberg said some landlords have used source of income as an excuse to refuse housing to the poor.

But Emily Cedarleaf, executive director of the Multi Housing Council of Oregon, said the main issue is the city's lack of affordable housing for the poor, not discrimination.

She said her group will oppose the source of income provision, which Lindberg said Monday may be amended.

At least three hearings have been scheduled on the proposed city ordinance, beginning this week.

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