

OCA takes new law to court



SALEM (AP) — The Oregon Citizens Alliance went to court Monday in a bid to overturn a new state law barring local governments from passing anti-gay rights ordinances.

The OCA asked the Marion County Circuit Court to declare the law unconstitutional on grounds that it deprives people of their rights to initiate laws.

In its lawsuit, the group also asked for speedy handling of the case because seven local elections are scheduled for Sept. 21 on OCA-sponsored measures.

The Legislature passed the law in late July, and Gov. Barbara Roberts signed it last week. It took effect immediately.

OCA Chairman Lon Mabon said Monday the organization could attempt to put an initiative measure on the ballot to repeal the law, but that would mean a public vote would be more than a year away.

"We feel it is so patently unconstitutional that this is the fastest and easiest way to go," he said.

The new state law prohibits cities and counties from enacting or enforcing ordinances that

give special rights to homosexuals or that single out any person or group based on sexual orientation.

Voters in Springfield, Cornelius, Junction City, Canby and Douglas, and Josephine, Linn and Klamath counties have approved anti-gay rights ordinances backed by the OCA.

Seven more local elections are scheduled next month, and three in November.

A leader of a group working to defeat the local measures said she believes initiative rights will not extend to anti-homosexual proposals like those of the OCA.

"The rights of a single group cannot be put up for a popular vote," said Julie Davis, executive director of Support Our Communities PAC.

Davis said the OCA long has argued it opposes special rights, but now that a law outlaws special rights, the organization says it is against it.

"I think it exposes the OCA for what they are, a group that wants to dictate against a minority because they do not agree with them," she said.

State Elections Director Colleen Sealock, meanwhile, is advising local officials to go ahead with elections on the OCA measures.

Eugene peace groups commemorate bombing

By Garin Gonzales
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Eugene PeaceWorks and Lane County American Peace Test honored the 48th commemoration of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Sunday at Alton Baker Park with an evening of activities and remembrance.

Hiroshima, Japan, was bombed 48 years ago on Aug. 6, and Nagasaki, Japan, was bombed three days later. Eugene PeaceWorks and Lane County American Peace Test have observed the event eight years straight with speakers, music and other activities.

Among the speakers were Steve Johnson, a teacher at the University, as well as a prominent figure in helping make Eugene and Lane County a nuclear-free zone, and City Council member Barbara Keller, an outspoken advocate of nuclear non-proliferation.

Along with the speakers and activities was also a paper crane folding and crane/candle float across the pond at Alton Baker Park. Thom Alberti, coordinator of Eugene PeaceWorks, said the crane float has special significance.

"After the bombing in Hiroshima, a little girl that was dying of radiation poisoning started folding paper cranes, with her goal being a thousand, which was supposed to bring good luck," Alberti said. "Unfortunately, before she reached her goal, she died. After people heard about her death, thousands of people sent paper cranes to her memorial, and many still bring paper cranes to her grave each year."

With this in mind, PeaceWorks and fellow observers sent out 1,000 paper cranes with candles attached across the pond at Alton Baker Park.

Eugene PeaceWorks and Lane County American Peace Test were founded in the late 1970s, initially called Citizens Action for Lasting Security. That group later evolved into PeaceWorks in 1985. PeaceWorks, as well as Lane County American Peace Test, share the goal of ending nuclear testing to end nuclear proliferation.

Another great concern to PeaceWorks and Lane County American Peace Test is putting an end to nuclear incineration programs. Alberti said there are nine places in the United States (the closest being Umatilla, Ore.) that store chemical weapons.

The U.S. government's plan to dispose of the chemicals is to incinerate them. This, Alberti said, could be very hazardous.

"There are alternative methods of destroying the chemicals," Alberti said. "Bio-remediation for one, which will neutralize the chemicals, which is a much safer process."

Alberti said it is imperative to remember the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"It's important to keep the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki alive so that we don't repeat our mistakes. We need to learn from the past," Alberti said.

PeaceWorks and Lane County American Peace Test are planning future events, such as the "Never Again Campaign," which is sending survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki across America to share experiences and keep the memory alive.

PeaceWorks is now working on finding places to house the survivors. For more information on the "Never Again Campaign," or for more information on becoming a PeaceWorks volunteer, call Ellen Klowden at 343-8548.

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