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Anti-rights measures could lose in courts

PORTLAND (AP) — Voters in six more Oregon cities and one more county have approved anti-gay rights measures that may end up being tossed out by state courts.

The Oregon Citizens Alliance sponsored the measures in Jackson County and in the cities of Creswell, Estacada, Lebanon, Medford, Molalla and Sweet Home.

All were approved last week, most by wide margins, according to final but unofficial results.

However, a state law that took effect Aug. 3 will block enforcement of any of the measures, at least until a court challenge by the alliance is settled.

The alliance's chairman, Lon Mabon, said the results showed that Oregonians reject gay rights and do not want the Legislature to interfere.

"I think the citizens are just saying 'no,'" Mabon said from his headquarters in Wilsonville.

"They want to vote on this issue," he said. "We've had 14 straight elections that have all overwhelmingly passed a local initiative. That's got to have some bearing on the elected officials, whether they're judges or legislators."

Voters in eight cities and counties already have passed measures that bar protecting gays and lesbians from discrimination.

The measures are a reworded version of an anti-homosexual initiative, Ballot Measure 9, that was rejected last year by 57 percent of voters statewide. That initiative would have declared homosexuality abnormal and perverse, and required state and local governments to discourage it.

The Oregon Citizens Alliance is gathering signatures to put a toned-down version on the November 1994 ballot statewide.

But the leader of Support Our Communities, a statewide group of gay rights supporters, predicted the new version will go down to defeat.

"I'm not that disheartened," said Julie Davis, the group's executive director.

"I really don't believe we have a flood of voters who rejected Measure 9 and are falling for the softer language," she said. "He hasn't gained any voters. He's gone into areas where he's already won handily."

Davis predicted an eventual backlash against the alliance and Mabon.

"He relies on the basic fears of people to move his own religious agenda," she said. "The sentiment is growing that Lon Mabon is imposing his agenda on the state, not gays and lesbians. I really feel that the veil is being pulled off Lon Mabon."

Officials of two counties and two cities have decided not to enforce anti-gay ordinances already passed by voters, partly as a result of lawsuits brought by the American Civil Liberties Union to nullify the laws.



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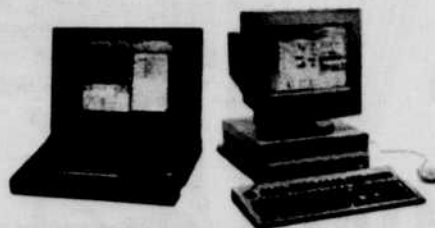


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