

Controversial bill introduced

Jarita Acosta
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

State Rep. Kevin Mannix, D-Salem, introduced a bill to the Oregon Legislature last week that would prevent unmarried couples from living in University Housing.

The bill is one of three controversial family-value bills recently introduced by Mannix. Others are the anti-insemination bill and a bill which would prohibit surrogate motherhood contracts.

The University Housing bill would prohibit local governments from extending benefits to unmarried partners. The bill reads, "that legal marriage between a man and a woman is a special relationship that should be favored and supported by the state."

Mannix said that under the guise of affirmative action and diversity, a couple can just pledge that they are dedicated to one another, and suddenly they are treated as the equivalent of a married couple for purposes of getting into married student housing.

He said he disagrees with this, and does not care if a couple is heterosexual or homosexual. If they are not a married couple they should not receive

the benefits that married couples receive.

The University's family housing policy is based on financial need, not marital status. Families with children have first priority for apartments. Families are defined as a parent or parents with children whether married or unmarried, homosexual or heterosexual.

In an interview with Channel 9 News last week, Mike Eyster, director of University Housing said, "We don't ask for marriage licenses and I'm sure that if we were required to do that, a good number of our student families would not be eligible to live in family housing."

Eyster said the rents are so low that University Housing constitutes a significant form of financial assistance. Therefore, the University decided it would be best to distribute the housing based on financial need.

"We're trying to be fair and acknowledge the needs of all students," he said.

According to Mannix, as a matter of social policy, unmarried couples should not be given the same benefits as married couples. He said he wrote the bill in an effort to preserve the sanctity of marriage.

Law Center sponsors weekend conference

Tasha Eichenseher
Oregon Daily Emerald

Does the term "environmental racism" mean anything to you?

It refers to the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on people of color, especially those living in low-income communities.

Nearly 25 activists and experts on environmental racism will participate in a conference Friday, Saturday and Sunday at the University Law Center.

"Common Realities: A Grassroots Conference on Environmental Racism and Justice" will include workshops, lectures and panels on issues ranging from water and fishing rights, to women and the environmental movement, to labor exploitation and workplace hazards. The

event is free to the public.

The Coalition Against Environmental Racism has been working since fall term of 1993 to organize the conference, which is the first of its kind at the University, according to Matt Kertesz, a CAER member.

CAER is a student organization designed to improve relations between the student unions and the survival center, while bringing attention to issues of environmental racism, Kertesz said.

"The conjuncture of environmental groups and the student unions has been an attempt to acknowledge that social and environmental issues can not be separated," he said.

More than 30 student organizations, academic department and University offices helped to

sponsor the \$7000 event, Kevin Chang said.

Chang, a member of the Asian/Pacific-American Student Union who works with CAER, said that the goal of the conference is to educate people about environmental racism.

He said guests speaking at the conference are leading activists in their communities and are a good source of inspiration to victims of environmental racism.

"A lot of these people are very powerful," he said. "These are people coming to our conference, real role models."

Prof. Haunani-Kay Trask will be presenting the keynote address on Saturday. Prof. Trask is an activist for Hawaiian sovereignty, and the author of three books.

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