

## Overtum Colorado anti-gay-rights law

Justice took a large step forward Tuesday when the Supreme Court agreed to rule on the constitutionality of a Colorado anti-gay-rights law.

It's about time.

The law, known as Amendment 2, bans local governments in Colorado from enacting laws to protect gays, lesbians and bisexuals from discrimination.

It is too late for the voters of Colorado to correct the mistake made in the November 1992 election. Unfortunately, Amendment 2 has passed. It is likely that a small number of vocal anti-gay-rights activists scared Colorado voters into believing that gays were people to be feared and that laws to protect them from discrimination was unnecessary.

However, quite the opposite is the case. Most would agree that gays are often subject to discrimination in varying forms. A number of gays have been killed, many more have been subject to brutal attacks and still others have been victims of hate crimes.

Without laws protecting themselves from discrimination, attacks against people based on their sexual orientation will increase from the already disturbing level to a frighteningly high number. Discrimination would become overt and commonplace. This isn't the type of society that should be encouraged in America.

Some argue that laws like Amendment 2 are needed to protect society from "special rights." The reality is that laws like the Amendment must be overturned to protect society from discrimination and to ensure equal rights for all.

Amendment 2 must be overturned.

If the Supreme Court rules that the amendment is constitutional, it will set the nation on a slippery slope downhill. It allows rights of citizens to be taken away at an election. If the citizens of a particular state decide to take away the rights of a particular group, there will be little, if anything, that the group can do. America would create a second-class of citizens who could easily be discriminated against. Opponents of the group would be able to discriminate, freely and with the blessing of the government.

The debate on gay rights is not solely a Colorado issue. Gay rights battles have been fought for several years here in Oregon. Gays, lesbians and bisexuals are discriminated against nationwide. Action from the Supreme Court is needed to ensure that legally, all citizens will be protected to the fullest extent of the law.

By passing Amendment 2, Colorado voters denied gay citizens of that state the right to safely express themselves as who they are.

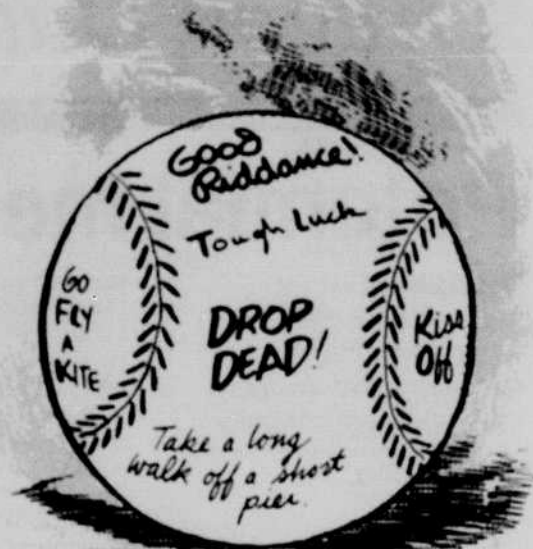
By overturning the Amendment, the Supreme Court can reverse that discrimination and make a bold and necessary statement. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation will not be tolerated in America.

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■ OPINION

## Computer literacy crucial for future



ANNE MOSER-KORNFELD

The four year stall, otherwise known as getting a bachelor's degree, is the time to learn how to operate computers and how to apply computer knowledge.

With all the computer technology available on campus, we are not learning enough about computer systems or how to use computers during our time at the University. The limited number of classes using the University gopher is testimony to how poorly instructed many students will be about the Internet and emerging technologies when they leave. The University currently graduates computer-impaired students.

We're not given the opportunity to take classes in computer basics. According to an assistant at the Computing Center, no class exists to teach students the basics of word-processing or how to use various computer platforms. There are only non-credit workshops. We're cheated and forced to stumble along and learn on our own.

The truth is that computer ignoramuses need someone willing to teach them how to use software applications. But that person would have to be a computer whiz with a big heart and an ample amount of patience.

Those students with the time, the inclination, the access to computers and the forethought to plan ahead will excel at using them. Sadly, those who haven't got the self-confidence to go to one of the campus computer labs and take on learning an intimidating software program are out of luck.

Even professional schools emphasizing computer-dependent, real-world environments don't adequately prepare students. For example, the School of Journalism and Communication doesn't develop students' knowledge of the

computer technology they'll encounter in print fields to a level of mastery. Students are encouraged to learn how to use page layout software and they must be proficient enough to use word processors.

Again, students are not offered classes devoted exclusively to teaching them how to use computer programs. Learning how to make a template or how to insert graphics is time consuming, but they are some of the many skills that set a beginner apart from someone who knows how software works. Creating class projects or printing out papers is not the same as learning the idiosyncrasies of new software.

Each new software application upgrade loses one or two old customers who insist they haven't figured out everything for the system they've had for past couple of years. Students can't possibly get everything out of a program through a 12-week class that doesn't even stress the application itself, but instead dances around the rim of it.

A typical instructor might tell students to "forget about that function — it's not important. All we care about in this class is what this menu does." Okay, sure. Whatever, just give me an A, the student says. The next time those students sit down at a terminal, they've only retained a third of what was already an abridged session with an unfamiliar program.

The education value of learning a new system has disappeared and students are back at square one because nothing was learned completely or with any intention of it sticking in their brains.

The benefits of becoming knowledgeable about computers are innumerable. Computer literacy makes us more visually aware and artistic. Computers add to our communication skills by giving us a safe place to test the waters of new-found information. On the Internet, anonymous correspondence give students a chance to feel their way in a rapidly changing world.

Computers are tools. Tools don't work by themselves. The

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idea that students should only learn how to use computers once they've refined the skills needed to use them productively negates the increasingly important role that computers have in daily life.

Over and over again, the argument is made that it doesn't matter if students don't know how to use computers because they can always learn how to do that. What matters is that students know how to read, write, do algebra or almost anything else. Wrong.

Experts in any field will readily admit that it took them years to get to be tops at what they do best. During the time they honed in on their life's passion, they also learned other skills, like how computers work.

Computer skills deserve more attention than is received on campus. Just because our parents didn't grow up with computers doesn't mean we can afford to lag behind in the same way.

Learning computers takes practice, guidance, a willingness to accept mistakes and an ability to ask for help. These are wonderful qualities, which can be gained through routine exposure to computers, and ones in which no competent adult wants to be lacking.

We need more computer classes to move out of the dark ages of strictly algorithm science-based instruction and into the applicable user-friendly world of CD-ROMs and data-retrieval.

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