

Board: State may opt to settle

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Eugene Water and Electric Board, Portland and Corvallis have already extended similar benefits to their employees.

But according to law Professor Dominick Vetri, only a small number of employees have traditionally come forward to get additional benefits at other universities. He cited the reason for this is that in most gay and unmarried domestic couples, both of the partners work and already receive insurance benefits from their jobs.

Vetri said the decision by the state to grant domestic partners of unmarried employees benefits is a "sound business move."

"I think it's a really good sign the [Public Employees Benefits Board] has decided to do this. The whole idea behind the extension of benefits is morale in the workplace," he said. "The University has an interest in protecting this."

Vetri also credits the board's decision to a "competitiveness" between government

and higher education in Oregon and in other states. He said the University will look more attractive to potential job applicants and students if it extends equal benefits to all employees and their partners.

But Kelly Matchett-Morris, a University employee who filed a suit against the State System of Higher Education, said he is skeptical that the state will follow through with its decision to extend benefits.

Matchett-Morris, associate director of Student Life, is

one of two University employees who filed suits against the State System of Higher Education alleging the University discriminated against him when it denied health benefits to his domestic partner.

However, Morris said that if the state settles outside of court in the OHSU case and extends benefits to his partner, it would make the state look bad for denying benefits in the first place.

"The biggest thing about settling outside of court is the public sees the state as admitting guilt," he said.

"The whole idea behind the extension of benefits is morale in the workplace. The University has an interest in protecting this."

Dominick Vetri
law professor

True Blue



AMANDA COWAN/Emerald

Sophomore Tobey Miller plays with his 9-week-old puppy, Blue, on Wednesday afternoon.

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