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PERSPECTIVES

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Finally, a point of pride for Oregon

The state's decision to grant benefits to domestic partners is a small but admirable step towards equality

We tend not to view Oregon or America as being particularly progressive. This is, after all, the nation that passed the anti-homosexual "Defense of Marriage Act" and the state where the Oregon Citizens Alliance still draws major backing at the polls.

Nevertheless, progressives won a small victory recently when the state Public Employees' Benefits Board voted to provide healthcare to the domestic partners of state employees — both straight and gay.

The victory has more than merely symbolic importance. Healthcare and other bene-

fits are important parts of employee compensation; denial of such benefits hurts employees and the employers trying to recruit them.

It is the symbolic significance of the gesture, however, that we consider particularly important. This week the University's Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered Alliance will hold a series of events celebrating Gay Pride Week, and the timing of the state's decision couldn't be better.

Acknowledging that same-sex and unmarried couples still deserve the recognition that comes from benefits is an important step toward ending unequal treatment of those who don't fall into "traditional" sexual and gender roles. It is, however, only a step.

This remains a fundamentally conservative state and

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

For some reason, discrimination against homosexuals remains not only common but also legal.

The federal government should adopt statutes prohibiting housing and employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Otherwise, such practices will continue to occur and those whose rights have been violated will have no clear and simple legal recourse.

Instead of pushing for such legislation, most recent political efforts concerning homosexuals have attempted to restrict freedoms and deny benefits, lamenting the provision of "special rights" to gays. By saying "special rights," groups such as the OCA are really referring to legal guarantees of equal treatment, which only demonstrates the need to strengthen

such guarantees.

The Oregon decision regarding public employees is really nothing more than a guarantee of equal treatment. At the same time, it illustrates another important issue of concern to homosexuals and all people interested in fairness: marriage.

Same-sex couples were initially denied benefits because they weren't married; spousal benefits couldn't be awarded to those the state didn't consider spouses. The recent decision does nothing to change that discriminatory practice.

Homosexual marriage is not a critical issue for some gay-rights lobbyists who are more concerned with the unique aspects of queer culture than with modeling mainstream society. There are many same-sex couples who consider themselves

married, however, and the government should recognize that bond.

Such a recognition wouldn't be a substitute for the new state policy. Many couples, homosexual and heterosexual, choose not to get married but live in much the same way as married couples and are just as entitled to marriage benefits as those who are legally bound.

During this week's activities, therefore, we will celebrate the fact that the state has made a small but significant gesture in recognizing that homosexual rights are an issue of equality, rather than religion, morality or personal beliefs.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Thumbs



TO WINDOWS 98 CRASHING:

At a recent convention, Bill Gates was demonstrating a preliminary version of Microsoft's newest operating system when the computer abruptly crashed and Gates had to move to a new machine. Two words: Just desserts.

GEORGE SOROS:

Astounding as it may seem, this billionaire has actually pledged to use a slice of his money for a good cause. Soros offered \$1 million in funds to match any donations given to needle exchange programs across the nation. He already pledged \$1 million last August to be used directly by such programs.



TO NEWT GINGRICH:

The House Speaker and potential presidential candidate is pushing for another capital gains tax cut. He and his pro-corporation cronies managed to push an earlier cut through as part of a previous budget, leading to less federal revenue to provide social services for the poor while slashing the tax burden for the very wealthy — the only people who earn enough money to have large investments and large capital gains.

DRAWING BOARD



<p>ITEMS FROM THE FUTURE</p> <p>CLINTON AUCTION</p> <p>AT</p> <p>SOOTHEBY'S</p> <p>MAR. 12, 2045, 10 AM</p>	<p>ITEM 32. VARIOUS PRESIDENTIAL DOODLES.</p>	<p>ITEM 65. PRESIDENTIAL LITTLE BLACK BOOK.</p>
<p>ITEM 150. STATUETTE BELONGING TO FIRST LADY.</p> <p>(NOTE: WAST RIGHT WING)</p>	<p>ITEM 208. LEASH USED ON JAMES CARVILLE.</p>	<p>ITEM 430. PHOTO OF UNKNOWN MAN.</p>

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EMU experience

I am writing in response to Chris Kenning's article on disabled students who work in the EMU (ODE, April 15). Although Kenning never explicitly states an opinion, his arrangement of quotes and other information suggests that the EMU is taking advantage of students with disabilities by not paying them wages. As a graduate student in special education, I feel I can offer a perspective that was missing in this article.

Ironically, I read this article while I was at my student teaching site where I work 35-plus hours a week for — yes, you guessed it — for free. I don't even get a free lunch or a dollar a day. Actually, if it wasn't for scholarship money, I would be paying the University for this experience. But that is not the point. The point is that much like the students who work in the EMU, I am gaining job experience that will eventually help me to gain employment after my graduation. Working in the community in exchange for experience and college credit is a fairly common practice among college students who

participate in field experiences, internships or practicums. The University even has the Community Internship Program to help students incorporate academic learning with service learning.

This term I happen to work with some of the students who presently work at the EMU or who have worked there in the past. These young adults work at a variety of job sites for short periods of time in order to improve their skills and discover their likes/dislikes and strengths/weaknesses. After working at a few sites, the student may learn that he or she likes working in food service but dislikes working in an office environment. This experience helps a person determine where they would like to work after graduating and also assures prospective employers that the person can perform the work required.

Providing opportunities for work experience is not a local idea. The federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 was created to ensure that all students would have the knowledge and skills necessary to make a smooth transition from ado-

lescence to adulthood. One component of school-to-work systems is to link school-based and work-based learning environments. The program at the EMU is just one of many opportunities being created for young adults to explore future work options. And hey, who doesn't dream about getting paid for the practicum or field experience.

Carlotta Hoffart
 Graduate Student

ASUO manifesto

I am an ASUO senator, and this is my manifesto.

Every week, I sit waiting for angry people. Sometimes I stand, but nevertheless, I wait. Someone approaches, and I am hopeful. They ask me where the bathrooms are, and I try to smile, but underneath I am sobbing. "Down the hall to your left," I manage to bite out in the cheeriest voice that I can muster. They leave, and I am left alone with my thoughts and a big sign that says "ASUO Grievance Table" in hopes that someone will come validate my existence.

I write this now, not for pity, but to educate the masses, especially those that feel like that University has be-

smirched their personal sanctity in some way. I know that there are persons out there, somewhere, who are angst-ridden due to something. I've had the opportunity to see a few, but they are a dying breed. Whether it be troubles with a program, questions about the incidental fee, or concerns with candidates exposing themselves in front of the EMU, I try to provide resolutions. I don't claim to have X-ray vision or cat-like reflexes, but I can provide answers or alternatives. I refuse to believe that we are approaching a utopian society — free of animosity or concern.

I am an ASUO senator, and I deal in problems. Currently, my job security is being threatened, and I must reach out for help. Every Tuesday in the EMU from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., I await the irate to come pound on my table, demanding that their injustices be righted. Generally, the only table pounding that occurs is from my own head trying to break the mind-numbing silence. My skull hurts, and I now grow weary. If they only would come ...

Jeff Kershner
 ASUO Senator