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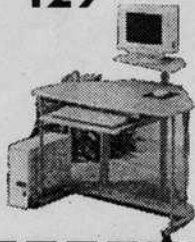


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Measure 9

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its first statewide victory.

A recent survey sponsored by The Oregonian and Portland's KATU-TV found that 47 percent of Oregonians support Measure 9, 48 percent oppose it and 5 percent are undecided.

OCA founder and director Lon Mabon said he was "very excited" about the poll results.

"We've never showed that high on any of our measures this early in the campaign," he said. "A lot of liberal parents who are comfortable with nondiscrimination in their jobs don't want it taught to their kids in school."

If Measure 9 passes, all state schools from kindergarten through community college would be prohibited from encouraging homosexuality, and those schools that do encourage it could lose state funding. Counseling programs, school-sanctioned groups for non-heterosexual students, health education and school tolerance policies would be changed, though supporters and opponents of the measure disagree about how they will change.

Though Mabon said the OCA could convince the legislature to include state universities in the ban if the measure passes, Oregon University System spokesman Bob Bruce said state universities would remain unchanged.

The measure's passage, however, would significantly affect the University's neighbor, Lane Community College.

"It would affect LCC just as it would affect K-12 schools," Robert Ackerman, chairman of the LCC board, said, adding that the LCC school board unanimously voted Sept. 13 to oppose the measure. "We view this as a denial of free speech, a violation of academic freedom and the marginalization of a group of students."

OPPONENTS RAISE HEALTH CONCERNS

Susan Matthews, LCC multicultural advisor, said the measure would change the atmosphere of the community college.

"It would completely change the climate here to one that is completely intolerant of LGBT students and staff," she said. "I think

that just having the measure on the ballot is devastating. It legitimizes homophobia."

Debate over the measure has renewed the "nature versus nurture" debate over the origins of homosexuality - supporters of the measure say homosexuality is a choice, while most opponents say it's genetic predisposition.

"We don't believe who a person has sex with and how they have sex is equal to race or religion," Mabon said. "It's a fundamental mistake people are making to equate homosexual behavior to minority status."

Like most who speak against Measure 9, University Program Coordinator Phil McCullum said at a Planned Parenthood-sponsored press conference on Sept. 18 that

“It would completely change the climate here to one that is completely intolerant of LGBT students and staff. I think that just having the measure on the ballot is devastating. It legitimizes homophobia.”

Susan Matthews
multicultural advisor
LCC

the measure would single out non-heterosexual students and subject them to harassment.

"When we talk about equal rights for all, we mean equal and all," he said.

Mabon, however, said that the measure would allow criticism of homosexuality but not harassment of gay and lesbian students.

"We are opposed to harassment at any level," he said. "But a lot of these programs are just disguising acceptance."

Though the measure's opponents say its passage would eliminate counseling for non-heterosexual students, Mabon disagrees, saying school counselors would be barred only from telling students it's acceptable to be gay. They could still counsel for depression and encourage students seek support from independent counselors.

Another concern opponents express is the possible restriction of health education.

"Measure 9 would place a stranglehold on the ability of schools to provide good HIV education," said May Gossart, a Planned Parenthood education director.

Solano, the Portland high school teacher who supports Measure 9, said health education would not be restricted, but rather expanded to include what he called the dangers of homosexual sex.

"This is affecting our schools, and this is affecting our health care," said state Rep. Kitty Piercy, D-Eugene. "Things are at stake for everybody."

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