

Monday, October 21, 2002

Allow proposal of domestic registry to become new social movement

On Oct. 14, the Eugene City Council heard public debate on two proposals from the Human Rights Commission concerning gay, lesbian and transgender citizens. Anywhere that gay rights are concerned, the city has to contend with extreme-right groups who say that any proposals that advance equality for homosexuals are an "affront to God."

The proposals would set up a domestic partner registry and require that businesses allow those who identify with an opposite gender to use the restroom facilities of that gender. Both should be made city law.

The proposal for a domestic registry is a tolerant first step. It is not a marriage, and it does not guarantee domestic partners benefits commensurate with what a spouse would receive. However, many civil-rights gestures started symbolically. One has only to look at the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation to see how a symbolic gesture eventually became a social movement.

While we do not harbor any illusions that the domestic registry will substantially decrease dislike of or violence against gays, we do think the program generally will increase tolerance for non-heterosexual couples. By showing the community as a whole that other couples are also capable of being loving families, perhaps the taboos will be further eroded.

Allowing transgender people to use restroom facilities of the gender they identify with simply makes sense.

Some people opposed to the commission's resolution said they would feel extremely uncomfortable if a person of the opposite gender were to walk into their restroom. But many transgender people do not "appear" to be their birth gender. Opponents would feel even more uncomfortable if someone who appeared to be a man was forced to use a women's restroom simply because he had a vagina.

Other opponents were outraged that, as they said, "predators" were being granted access to commit sexual assaults. There are two problems with this.

For one, transgender people are not more likely to be "predators" than any other demographic. This is an old slander that needs to die. Second, a "women" sign on a restroom door won't stop predators intent upon assault, regardless of their gender.

The benefits of this proposal — allowing transgender people, who encompass a wide range of physical and psychological difference, to feel and behave as if they were full members of our community — far outweigh the potential for others to feel uncomfortable.

Both of these proposals are smart, tolerant public policy, and the majority of Eugeneans at public hearings supported them. City Council should pass them both.

Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailymerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

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Give a woman a chance

George W. Bush may not be my generation's greatest president. He's inarticulate, quick to judge and doesn't identify with today's youth. In a nutshell, he's a man's man.

A lot of my peers hate him and his misogynistic policies. Luckily, in exactly 742 days, Bush could be replaced in our democracy with someone more effective — a woman.

With only two years to go, the Democratic and Republican parties need to start campaigning viable female candidates now for the top job. After all, it's going to take two years worth of convincing the millions of conservatives who uphold our great patriarchy that a woman can handle the job — and might, in fact, fare better than the centuries of men in the past.

The United States needs a woman president in 2004 because we have qualified candidates. In an era of glass ceilings, the symbolic meaning of a female chief executive would give hope to the "better half" of Americans struggling for equal rights. And it would prove to the international community that we mean it when we claim to value women as leaders — unlike our misogynistic counterparts in big, bad countries like Afghanistan.

If Evita Perón, Helen Clark or Megawati Sukarnoputri can run a country, who's to say the same can't happen in the most powerful nation in the world? First we need to give a viable woman nominee a fair chance to compete.

So, which female politician is experienced, marketable and could garner enough financial support to become chief executive in 2004?

Elizabeth Dole briefly campaigned in the 2000 election and would make an ideal presidential candidate in 2004 with her extensive background both in Washington politics and as president of the American Red Cross. But the problem with Liddy is that her conservative constituents are unlikely to vote a woman — any woman — into office. Republican women have a hard enough time filling seats in the Senate, let alone the Oval Office; of the 49 Republican spots available, only 3 females currently fill Senate seats.

Our first American female president will have to be a Democrat, simply because Democrats will vote for a qualified



Peter Utsey Emerald

woman without getting muddled up in ideals of morality, family values or prescribed gender roles.

Hillary Clinton is the model candidate because of her experience in Arkansas politics, as First Lady and now as a New York senator. But according to a Marist Institute for Public Opinion poll released last week, 69 percent of Americans say Clinton should never run for president. Decline in Clinton's support has more than doubled since the poll's last finding in March 2001, when 30 percent said she should run.

If Americans won't support Clinton, another Democratic party candidate could be Dianne Feinstein. The senator's track record serving the 35 million constituents in California has been mostly good, although she has made a few enemies within her own party for not voting along the party line. Most recently, Feinstein joined the ranks of Clinton to sup-

port the president on force in Iraq when both women originally opposed action. Despite Feinstein's frequent changes of heart, she has the potential to become a great national leader.

Barbara Boxer, Patty Murray and Marcy Kaptur are other names that come to mind when compiling a list of potential candidates. And some may argue Madonna would make the ultimate president — but I have a feeling she may want Tony Blair's job instead.

A new millennium should bring modern changes in America's political system. We have female candidates that could do the same job as 43 men have done in the past. Voters just have to find the balls to elect them.

Contact the columnist at julia.lauderbaugh@dailymerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Letters to the editor

Campaigns support improvements for students

After studying our gubernatorial and Senate candidates' platforms, I am writing to urge the University community to support Bill Bradbury for Senator and Ted Kulongoski for Governor. Bill Bradbury's proposal to elevate Oregon's economy involves spending federal dollars to improve our ports, roads, bridges and mass transit systems. In addition to bringing dollars to Oregon, these infrastructure improvements would provide jobs. Bradbury is also committed to seeking federal funds to help build an engineering school in our state, making us a logical destination for established and growing tech firms seeking talent.

Bradbury's opponent merely suggests accelerating tax cuts — how could one not remember the dismal failure of that strategy on a national level? — and extending unemployment benefits. Oregon families and students deserve more than an improved last resort.

I support Bradbury's "New Deal" for Oregon, and urge students to begin to

consider which candidate will provide them with the option of finding work in Oregon after graduation. Kulongoski is on record confirming his support for raises for our educators through the college level and holding the three-percent-per-year tuition increase cap.

Both of these things are possible from a tenacious, intelligent problem-solver with the proven will and skill to push the state budget back in the black. Please vote. And please vote for Ted Kulongoski and Bill Bradbury, who have made clear commitments to a brighter future for our state, our educators and our students.

Beth Juhas
senior
history

Cops are people, too

At 2:30 a.m. Sept. 28, my husband got called into work on his weekend off after only two hours of sleep. Not knowing what was happening, I laid awake in bed, literally sick with worry, until he finally arrived home at 7 a.m.

The riot ruined what could have been a great Saturday with the love of my life. I'm a 25-year-old University student and

staff member. My husband is a Eugene police officer. The behavior that took place at the riot was very disappointing. To make matters worse, I recently read in The Register-Guard that during the riot, a male student was passing out chunks of concrete, telling partygoers to throw them at the police.

Clearly, some people have forgotten that cops are people, too. Just because they wear a badge doesn't mean that they don't fear for their own safety. They put their lives on the line everyday and put up with such insolent behavior as having bottles and concrete thrown at them.

They also have girlfriends, boyfriends, spouses and children waiting at home. What they deal with on the job sometimes affects their personal lives. Not to mention that a concrete block to the head can be fatal.

Being a cop is hard, and so is being a cop's wife. I have worried about my husband being hurt on numerous occasions. I just never thought that I'd have to worry about my fellow students being the ones to bring such a fate to our family.

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