

UO rules forbid group from siding on Measure 36

Although Measure 36 is a key issue for LGBTQA members, the group can't hold an official position on it

BY JARED PABEN
NEWS EDITOR

Members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Alliance can wear 'No on 36' buttons in their EMU basement-level office, but they can't tape flyers to the wall.

The group can hand out materials about the measure, but the materials have to be strictly informational and can't take a position.

Members can persuade people to vote against the measure banning same-sex marriage, but not as LGBTQA representatives and only on their own time.

As the Nov. 2 election day nears, groups across campus and the nation have ratcheted up the intensity of

their efforts to define how Oregon's constitution, and those of other states, are going to define marriage.

But LGBTQA, a University student group whose members could have a lot to lose by the passage of Measure 36, has to walk a tightrope. LGBTQA is student-fee funded and, according to state law, can't use the money to advocate for specific measures. If it does, it could lose its office and its funding.

For LGBTQA Co-director Crystal Cathcart, this is frustrating. Measure 36 will drastically affect members of her group, but their hands are tied, she said.

"It's stuff we're passionate about, and if politics are messing with our lives ... and if it conflicts with our

mission statement, then I think we should have some degree or power to be for or against something," Cathcart said. "I came in the first day of school thinking we could be against it, and it was really disheartening."

Cathcart said many members of the LGBTQA have volunteered for the No on 36 Campaign in their personal time, allowing them to weigh in on the contentious issue without endangering the group's funding.

"A lot of people in here are volunteering for the No on 36 Campaign, every day (they are) talking to people, standing by the Yes on 36 table talking to people" and clarifying what 'yes' and 'no' votes actually mean, she said.

LGBTQA Co-director John Correa said the group met on Oct. 4 with Outlaws, the lesbian and gay law student association, and representatives of the Oregon Student Association and the ASUO to clarify the guidelines about what the group could do.

"It's amazing how much we can do," Correa said.

OSA representative Courtney Hight, who met with LGBTQA to discuss the rules, said the group is able to provide materials that clarify what 'yes' and 'no' votes mean, but can't push people either way. Members can also wear buttons or stickers on their bodies, but can't post materials in the office

advocating a certain position.

Hight said LGBTQA has asked lots of questions and has been careful not to violate rules and jeopardize the group.

The rules apply to all groups that receive student incidental money, which is considered state money. The College Democrats and the College Republicans do not receive student fees, which allows them to lobby on behalf of their candidates, Hight said.

ASUO Student Senator Toby Hill-Meyer, who is also a member of the LGBTQ community, said the rules have burdened a greater number of student groups in past years, and the LGBTQA is clearly the most affected this year.

The University administration has also made the rules clear to faculty and staff, who are bound by the laws governing the use of state funds. In an e-mail to University deans and directors, General Counsel to the University Melinda Grier specifies that employees can't spend work time advocating for or against a measure or candidate, use state resources to support a campaign, post political flyers in the workplace or require an employee to take a position or participate in political activities.

Grier wrote that employees can use their personal time, including lunch breaks, for political work and discussing political positions and are

free to wear political buttons.

The rules surrounding the use of student incidental fees in advocating during elections were originally clarified by a June 1985 decision by then-Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer, who is now president of the University.

Cathcart said the rules have been especially difficult lately because group members have received more verbal harassment than usual as the election approaches.

"We are having negative repercussions on campus. People are disrespecting queer people," Cathcart said, adding that the group has recently received a slew of hate mail on the office computer. "When we start feeling this on campus, we should be able to do something."

But, even Cathcart admits it's not that simple. She and Correa have no way of determining whether everybody in their community is actually against Measure 36, she said. In fact, there have been rumors of religious differences in the office and differences of opinion about the measure, and the last thing her group wants to do is alienate its members, she said.

"We don't even know if people are going to vote 'no,'" she said. "(At) our general meetings here, we're not going to ask people to raise their hands."

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Coming Out Week celebrates campus diversity, sexuality

Today's rally is the first of several LGBTQA events this week in honor of National Coming Out Day

BY CANELA WOOD
NEWS REPORTER

"Come Out Come Out, Wherever You Are" is this year's theme for National Coming Out Week sponsored by the University's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer Alliance.

The week of events, beginning today, honors National Coming Out Day. According to the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Web site, this year's theme is "Come Out. Speak Out. Vote." The organization encourages gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender

Americans to talk to their families and friends about their lives.

"This day is about coming together in large numbers, recognizing our strength and validating our own and each other's life experience," LGBTQA Co-Directors Crystal M. Cathcart and John Correa said in an e-mail interview.

The week's events begin today with a coming out rally from 1 to 3 p.m. in the EMU Amphitheater. At the rally, speakers from LGBTQA will share their own coming out

stories. The rally will also host organizations such as the HIV Alliance, The Women's Center, and LGBTQA sub-groups: Bi and Beyond, a group for those attracted to more than one gender, and Fusion, a group for gay people of color.

"National Coming Out Day is a day of empowerment, a day to be proud of every part of oneself, specifically one's sexuality," Cathcart and Correa said in the e-mail. "It is a day to celebrate diversity. It is also about community."

Today's events will end with a coming out dance from 8 to 11 p.m. in the EMU Fishbowl. Cathcart and Correa encourage community

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