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■ In my opinion Columnists form civil union **against** Measure 36

Ailee Slater — NO

Many conservative Republicans have been duped into thinking that they should vote in favor of Measure 36. This is not the case. Voting yes on 36 sets a scary precedent in which big government is allowed to interfere with private institutions, especially religious ones. As a conservative, consider also that a constitution should be a stable document, amended rarely. Although protection of marriage may be important, constitutions cannot be distorted at each whim of the government. Surely there is a better form of marriage regulation. Remember, defeating Measure 36 does not make gay marriage legal. The union of one man and one woman will still be the only form of marriage recognized by most churches and state law. For social, religious or moral conservatives, no on 36 is the best choice. It ensures that religious organizations are allowed independence and that government stays out of private affairs.

Jennifer McBride — NO

Though I'd rather see gay marriage enacted through the legislature, I'd be happy to see the courts grant us our civil rights. The fact is, plain and simple, that gay marriage should be allowed. Priests won't be forced into marrying couples. Children will be adopted into stable homes. It won't hurt anybody and any suggestions that

the state would be endorsing homosexuality by allowing such weddings to occur are malicious and unwarranted. Nobody is going to suddenly believe homosexuality is right or wrong just because some people can now marry when once they could not. In a world full of so much hate, what's wrong with legalizing love? How would that threaten heterosexual marriage in the least? Big Brother has no right to determine who I commit to, and if that person is of my gender, another gender or is a sexless alien from the planet Gzola, it is my choice and no one should get in the way of my joy. Vote no.

Chuck Slothower — NO

What remains to be said? Measure 36 has garnered far more attention on campus than any of the other ballot measures this year, and much has been written on it by myself and others. Gay marriage is, like abortion, an intensely controversial social issue on which everyone has already made up his or her mind. Those who support Measure 36 base their arguments on tradition, religion and emotion. I find no value in debunking their arguments because they don't pretend to use rationality or logic. Measure 36 supporters fail to see the parallels between themselves and those who thought interracial marriage would cause the downfall of society. They fail to see that they want to en-

shrine something in Oregon's constitution that won't last because of changing social norms and legal thought. It's really rather exasperating. Things like Measure 36 make me glad I live in Eugene.

Travis Willse — NO

The legalization of gay marriage is one of those political issues that enjoys (or suffers) majority opposition from a wide range of social demographics: College graduates and non-graduates, the religious and the not, urban, suburban, rural, all regions of the country, whites, blacks and Hispanics, according to a Pew Research Center survey taken last fall. While popularity might be a good way to run a democracy, it's often a poor way to sort out fundamental legal rights, as this country's torrid but improving history of unequal treatment shows. Likewise, democratically encoding what amounts to a limitation on rights in the state's constitution is a poor choice. Simply put, a constitution is a place to specify rights, not to preemptively limit them. (Oregon's constitution has a poor track record on this point, at times restricting rights according to race or ethnicity.) No matter how you feel about gay and lesbian political issues, or the sanctity of marriage, keep as much social policy out of our constitution as possible and vote no on Measure 36.

INBOX

To protect forests, vote no on 34 and 37

I agree with your editorial board that Measure 34 is a terrible idea. However, it is essential that voters also know about another serious threat to our forests and farmland: Measure 37.

Measure 37 is a misleading and dangerous measure that would roll back Oregon's safeguards that protect forests and farmland from being converted

into stripmalls and sprawl. That's why environmental groups including the Sierra Club, OSPiRG and the League of Conservation Voters, are against it.

The timber industry has already spent \$750,000 for the Yes on 37 campaign, because they know the law will allow them to do more clear-cutting, unless taxpayers pay them hundreds of millions of dollars. That's not fair.

Measure 37 is also extremely expensive. The State Treasury estimates it

would cost \$344 million just to process the claims, not to mention all the money it would take to pay out the claims. This measure will gut the already meager state budget, which will mean cuts to education and other programs.

To protect our environment and our state budget, vote no on Measure 37. For information contact the author at margie_klein@lcv.org or 646-408-6160.

Margie Klein
Project Democracy

■ Editorial

Religion, marriage should not be governed

Even for those who believe marriage should be between one man and one woman, this measure is a bad idea because of the precedent it sets.

The institution of marriage is important and should be protected, no doubt. The issue is clouded, however, by the distinction between marriage in the civil sense and marriage in the religious sense.

Marriage in the civil sense pertains to laws governing joint ownership of property, life insurance benefits, decision-making in the case of a medical emergency, etc. For the good of the people, government sets these guidelines and makes these decisions at the state and county level. State-sanctioned marriage is a civil contract, not a religious contract.

However, marriage, for most couples, is more than a collection of legal rights. Many couples ascribe religious significance to marriage — for others the only significance is interpersonal. In any case, the decision to bring one's faith to a marriage is a private one, as it should be. Government has no business legislating marriage in the religious sense — especially in the constitution.

Each couple expresses faith through marriage in unique ways. What does and does not count as marriage in the religious sense should be determined by the couples themselves with the guidance of their rabbis, priests, imams, pastors or other clergy.

No church, mosque or synagogue should be forced to condone gay marriage. Similarly, the state of Oregon should not be forced to adopt a religious definition of marriage. The two should be kept separate, for the good of both the state and the church. We enjoy this freedom because of the separation of church and state.

Though the term "separation of church and state" has been hijacked by atheistic fundamentalists in an attempt to keep religion out of public life, separation of church and state was originally intended to protect religious organizations from the inappropriate influence of government and vice versa. To promulgate religious ideals through the constitution is a grave disservice to religious groups and people of faith.

Those who wish to dismantle the separation of church and state don't understand it is that it is designed to protect religion from the government. America was founded on the belief that all religions should be free to express their faith without government interference. To do so, the government agrees to stay out of the religion business.

That is why the U.S. Constitution is the best in the world. And it can continue to be the best, if only those who support measures like 36 hold the Constitution half as sacred as they hold their documents of faith.

It would be a tragic precedent for government to decide a religious disagreement. Whatever one believes about gay marriage, can't we all agree that this dispute should not be settled in the pages of our constitution? This is reason enough to vote against Measure 36.

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailymerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.