

Code: Some concerned change will invite sexual predators

Continued from page 1

less safe in restrooms than they are now, but that's certainly not the case," Kelly said.

The code the commission is drafting would make it illegal to prohibit transgender people from, among other things, using a bathroom of their choice.

Mike Jaskilka, a pastor of Berean Baptist Church in Eugene, said he does not support the ordinance for a number of reasons.

Jaskilka said he has talked with many women in the community who are concerned about allowing transgender people access to whichever bathroom they choose.

"I've talked with many, and they all feel that this policy threatens their sense of privacy and safety," Jaskilka said.

Kelly said such fears are typically the result of severe misunderstandings about what the ordinance intends to do. He said allowing transgender people access to the bathroom of their choice does

nothing to make bathrooms more accessible to sexual predators.

"There's no physical bar at the entrance of bathrooms," Kelly said, referring to the current lack of laws or ordinances that prohibit members of the opposite sex from entering any bathroom they choose.

Jaskilka said he also opposes the code change because gender identity is recognized as a psychiatric disorder. "I think that's where help needs to be offered, rather than attempting to make it sound normal," Jaskilka said.

Hill-Meyer said if being transgender or having an alternate view of gender identity is truly a psychiatric disorder then it should be protected in the Americans with Disabilities Act, which it isn't.

Jaskilka said he does not see the reason for the code change because of the lack of documented incidents of discrimination based on gender identity.

He said the proposal for the code change mentions findings that show a discriminatory environment for

transgender people — findings he said he has been unable to obtain in actual paper form from various city officials he has contacted.

"I've called three times and asked for the findings, and there are no findings," Jaskilka said. "I just don't see it as a necessary thing at all, and I think a lot of people feel that way."

Maceo Persson said transgender people live in such isolation that a lack of documented incidents of discrimination is to be expected.

Persson, who served on the commission's ad hoc committee, said a major reason for passing the code change is "getting the point across that gender-varient people have issues" that need to be publicly addressed to avoid isolating and disenfranchising them further.

Kelly said more than 70 jurisdictions have passed ordinances similar to the code change currently being examined and that no incidents involving sexual predators hanging out in bathrooms came about as a result.

Hill-Meyer said the concerns

being expressed about the change in Eugene are the same concerns that were expressed elsewhere and that they were proven to be ill-conceived.

Both Hill-Meyer and Kelly said they are optimistic about the chances of the ordinance winning City Council approval, but both say they have not disregarded the possibility of something coming up that would slow down or halt the process.

Hill-Meyer said a referendum passed in the late 70s reversed a change that had added sexual orientation to the anti-discrimination code. Hill-Meyer said a well-organized group of people spearheaded the referendum effort back then and that people involved in this year's effort have resigned themselves to the possibility that such action could be taken again.

"There's definitely the possibility of a referendum within our mind," Hill-Meyer said.

meghanncuniff@dailyemerald.com

Contest: ALS splits massages among staffers

Continued from page 1

However, Hintz said it is important to be prepared for Eugene's weather.

"The biggest thing is to have fenders on your bike or you'll get soaked," Hintz said.

He said winning the massages was simply a bonus for doing something already does. Massages will be performed by professional masseuse Jennifer Olsen.

Cooper said because the 15-minute massages are only available for two hours, staff members had to choose who would be rewarded.

Nuetzman said even though she traveled 213 more miles than ALS' second place alternative traveler, she doesn't deserve two massages.

"I'm happy to be getting the one massage," Nuetzman said. "I'm just glad we won."

sheldontraver@dailyemerald.com

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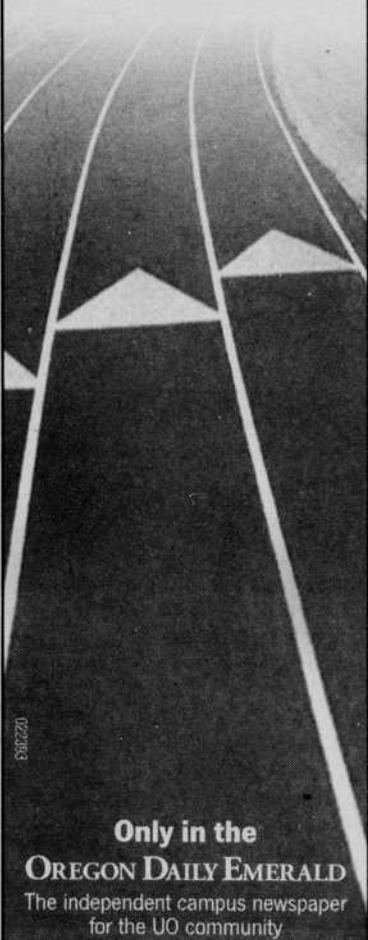


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