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letters

A developing agenda

To the Editor:

The terrible and exciting election in this state is over, and we can take a breath of air and a sigh of relief. After all, for now at least, we are not officially perverse or legally barred from public employment if we decide to be honest with people. Makes us feel kinda secure, doesn't it?

If our answer is "yes" then we deserve Measure 9—or what is certainly coming in just two short years. Now the *real work* begins! Though my sexual orientation is hardly a secret (or shouldn't be) to those who know me, as my beloved partner and I celebrated 15 years together in October, this is the first time I have "gone public" since we moved to Oregon three years ago. This is taking some risk, as I work with young people, and the OCA isn't going to go away. The results of this last election supports a little faith that we can meet the challenge ahead. Having a woman I used to work with approach me to say, "Edward, if I had never met you and your lover I would have voted 'yes' on Measure 9," further buttresses my store of pride and confidence. It also tells me, clearly, what we need to do.

We must, *without delay*, call a congress of ourselves together—the lesbians and gays, and the parents, politicians and community leaders who know, love and support us. This "congress of hope and justice" should have the following "agenda" (funny—I, for one, had no "agenda" whatsoever before this Measure 9 travesty was shoved in my face):

1. Establish and disseminate a clear and persuasive theological foundation to counter the obvious misbeliefs of the Christian right.
2. Establish a core group of moderate speakers for—and supported by—our community to go out to those southern and eastern counties, visit church groups, distribute positive literature, purchase air time, show documentaries such as *The Times of Harvey Milk*, and otherwise provide positive role models for citizens who really don't know we are good people.
3. Establish a research bureau to accumulate documentary and scientific evidence showing the true nature of "core" homosexuals as a disposition of *birth, not choice*.
4. Formulate a counter-ballot initiative to establish the rights of all people as unassailable constitutionally—well beyond the reach of any simple election majority.
5. Establish a standard of public behavior and ethics that will self-regulate events.
6. Set up and support a dedicated group of "vigilantes" to watch and expose in the press the

machinations of the OCA and the militant Christian right.

7. Establish a terminal for a nationwide fundraising network to support this effort, and to counter the funds that come from national organizations of the militant Christian right, à la Pat Robertson and his ilk.

My fellow lesbian and gay Oregonians: We have had the dubious honor of living in [one of] the first "test case states" that will determine if the inexorable wheel of equal rights for all people that has been rolling in this blessed land since 1789 is to be stopped and turned back. We have also had the cutting edge of the American Civil Rights Movement pressed to our collective necks. The whole world watches to see if we will lose our heads or hold them high!

Edward De Vito
Portland

The world is watching

To the Editor:

Quite simply, I write to tell you that though I am 5,000 miles away, I think of your struggle each day, and I am with you in my heart. Trite but true—you are on the front lines, already heroes in a battle not yet won. As gays and lesbians, we remember all too well the debilitating effect of isolation in the face of adversity, be it AIDS or ignorance. Know that you are not alone. The world is watching. As the first of many rounds draws to a close, have pride in the fact that you inspire us, an entire Queer Nation, with your courage and strength.

Joseph Best
New York, NY

What's driving Colorado

To the Editor:

As you are aware, the state of Colorado recently passed the most homophobic and horrendous legislation to be enacted in recent times.

What you might not be aware of is the fact that one of the prime financial supporters of this amendment and one of the strongest opponents of gay and lesbian civil rights is a man named Wil Perkins, who is the owner of Perkins Chrysler Plymouth Dealership in Colorado Springs. This amendment has basically been underwritten by funds from the sale of Chrysler cars.

Ian C. Gibson-Smith
Thomas G. Martin
Washington, D.C.

transitions

Sweeney Michael Ellis

Sweeney Michael Ellis died in his home Oct. 31 from causes related to AIDS. He was 33 years old.

Ellis was born in Milwaukee, Wis., and grew up in Indiana, where he attended high school. As a hearing-impaired youth he participated in the Special Olympics swimming and ice skating teams.

When he moved to Portland in his early 20s, he trained to become a Certified Nurse's Aide and worked in that field for several years. During that time, he and a friend worked with street youth giving them temporary shelter, feeding them and counseling them about drugs and other issues.

During July of this year, Ellis achieved a lifelong dream when he traveled to London and visited various historic sights in the area.

He is survived by his parents, Oakie and John Ellis of Portland; his brothers, John, Terry and Neil of Portland, Dan of Hillsboro, and Kevin of Richmond, Ind.; his sisters Mary Midkiff of Mollala, Meda Hicks of Portland and Nancy Enloe of Hesperian, Calif.; and several nieces and nephews.

His is also survived by his other "family," Meg MacBean, Opal Yansky, Jeff Case, Jim Coffey, William Bialk, Brian Smith, Gary Whitehead and Mary Jadwisiak.

His family and friends would be pleased if donations in his name were made to Kaiser Hospice Program, Cascade AIDS Project, the HIV Day Center, or any other organization that helps people with AIDS.

Ron Schmidt

Ron Schmidt barely got his last wish. This fall the prominent public relations expert announced that he hoped he would live to see Ballot Measure 9 defeated; he did. Schmidt died Nov. 7 after a seven-year battle with cancer. He was 56.

Schmidt's career in public relations spanned more than 25 years and included clients such as Sen. Mark Hatfield. His advertising firm, the Schmidt/Westerdahl Group Ltd., lost only two of the 21 ballot measure campaigns it took on in 12 years. When Schmidt heard that Ballot Measure 9 lost, he wrote, "It will bring Oregon together again."

Schmidt is survived by his wife, Ede.

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