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steppin' out



Dupont Circle was flooded with gay men, lesbians and garbage during the March on Washington last April.

editorial

Get your heinies out of town

The first wave of ballot initiatives is sweeping through rural Oregon in June

by Ariel Waterwoman

Are you and your friends wondering how to really celebrate gay and lesbian pride this year? How about driving to a town in Josephine, Douglas, Klamath or Linn counties? Grants Pass is lovely this time of year. Think how much fun you could have. Remember when Queer Nation went to Troutdale and was overwhelmed with the warm welcome they received? You'd be surprised how happy people are to have us visit their towns.

During the month of June every gay man, lesbian, and bisexual living in the city is needed in the rural communities on the weekends. Civil rights activists from these counties are calling for urbanites to come out and help them. Mail ballots will be going out on June 9 and must be returned no later than June 29. These are critical times for door-to-door contact and phone-banking to occur.

Many activists agree that the Cornelius measure passed because voters were confused by the wording and didn't understand what they were voting for. The Oregon Citizens Alliance seems to go out of its way to make the ballot measures as confusing as possible. Most of us are familiar with that tactic. The rural communities need bodies to help go door-to-door, to clarify what voting "yes" or "no" will mean. These communities are large in area, but small in population. If enough canvassers had gotten into Cornelius, the vote could have been remarkably different.

The fight against Ballot Measure 9 has left many of us

wounded and still working to put our lives back together again. It is difficult so soon after that exhausting fight to pick ourselves up and do it again. And people are needed, no matter what state of healing you are in. There are many functioning organizations working all over the state to make a difference. They just need a few more people to help out during this June ballot time.

Contact Marcy Westerling of the Rural Organizing Project at (503) 397-7110. She is in touch with rural organizations statewide. Oregon Speak Out, at 294-9260, is also set up to work urban dwellers into its educational efforts. If you don't have any time to invest, but you have some extra money, contact Support Our Communities PAC at 222-6151. You could also contact the Coalition for Human Dignity or the Human Rights Coalition in the counties mentioned above.

In another vein, some political activists are starting to meet and talk about submitting a pro-active initiative to the voters. It might be something as simple as affirming the constitutionally mandated civil rights of all Oregonians. It would be a positive proposition that we could all work on with hope for a real victory. We would certainly present it clearly, in an easily understandable format. It is high time we stepped out of the victim role of reaction and into a powerful place of action. The vast majority of Oregonians are good-hearted people who would love a chance to come together in agreement on a positive initiative that would promote everyone's human dignity.

contents

VOL. 10 NO. 14 JUNE 1, 1993

FEATURES

New queer in the House

George Eighmey takes his seat at the table and becomes Oregon's second openly gay legislator
(pp. 14-15)

Bias crimes

The pain behind the numbers
(pp. 18-19)

DEPARTMENTS

National news

Hawaii Supreme Court OKs same-sex marriage; Roberta Achtenberg becomes the highest-ranking openly gay member of the Clinton administration
(pp. 5-8)

Local news

(pp. 16-17)

COLUMNS

Strategies

Ashland adopts sexual orientation protections
(p. 10)

Legislative update

Civil rights bill stalled in committee
(p. 12)

Lesbian and Gay Pride

Portland preps for its annual pride festival and parade
(p. 24)

ARTS

Theater

Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland has enough talent and diversity for everyone
(p. 29)

Books

A new book explores the culture of gay men in the United States
(p. 25)

Music

Dr. Tantalus reviews the Rose City Gay Freedom Band
(p. 27)