

letters

No one called

To the Editor:

My recent trip to Washington, D.C. for the March on Washington was very empowering. When I got back home, I wrote 71 letters, to every representative and senator involved in the Armed Services, to lift the ban in the military. Granted, I own a computer and it only took me three hours total. The reason I'm writing is to express my shock and dismay at my community, the gay and lesbian community.

In your recent issue, you printed Klamath Falls representative Del Parks's phone number (378-8878). He is responsible for keeping SB 34 in the House Judiciary Committee. You stated he will not let the bill onto the House floor for a vote. I called and took issue with a member of his staff. To my horror, he informed me his office has received over 600 calls supporting the representative's decision. I can't believe there are not at least 600 gays and lesbians in this state who know how to read and care if their civil rights are decimated. Where is our community? It took only five minutes to call and express my outrage. Surely our civil rights are worth the time! During the last year, we barely upheld our pitiful status as second-class citizens with the defeat of Measure 9. Now we have a chance to become equal citizens, and what do we do? Nothing! Now is the time to get off our duffs and work like hell, so we won't have to raise another two million dollars to save our asses from the OCA. Please, wake up and let's do this together.

Keith King
Portland

Politics is politics is journalism?

To the Editor:

You have likely read or heard about the response from *The Oregonian's* poll identifying supposed supporters and opponents of SB 34, banning discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodation on the basis of sexual orientation. I have heard from many in our community about which House members were listed where, with emotions ranging from surprise to confusion to anger.

A short time ago, an *Oregonian* reporter asked my opinion on the initial idea of conducting such a poll. I told the reporter I objected to the effort for two reasons: policy and politics.

From a policy perspective, publicized polling precludes both open debate and private deliberations. SB 34 has not had a hearing in our chamber; members have no idea whether, should there be a hearing and subsequent work session, there will be substantive amendments offered and/or accepted; some members have not invested the time or thought to form solid opinions about the issues raised in the bill.

In addition, I strongly disagree with any effort approaching advocacy journalism by the fourth estate. To list the names of House members, with their Capitol phone numbers (not even bothering to state their district number or location), is inexcusable. Though not a professional journalist, I know news media take great pride in their objectivity and appropriately go to great lengths to safeguard it. For any journalist or journalistic publication to gain or retain credibility, objectivity is—and should be—sacrosanct.

Politically, listing the names of those supporting, opposed, undecided and refusing to answer *The Oregonian's* poll on SB 34 does no good and, potentially, a great deal of harm. It hurts our efforts to make progress in ensuring equal opportunity for gay and lesbian Oregonians by forcing some members into one camp or the other—without effecting any law. It also throws a huge wrench into one-on-one discussions about the

bill. Delicate and often uneasy negotiations may now blow up in our face.

Further, I am a firm believer in a "Never say die until *sine die*." Publishing unscientific poll results on a bill not enroute to the House floor only encourages opponents to declare premature victor. The concept of SB 34 may yet be voted on this legislative session; I am working to see it is; *The Oregonian's* poll doesn't help in the slightest.

Because of my concerns, I told *The Oregonian* reporter I wouldn't reply to the poll. Two days later, another *Oregonian* reporter asked me directly, "If SB 34 were up for a floor vote today, would you support it?" My response: "Duh." I was then listed (correctly) as a supporter of SB 34.

If you want to know where a legislator stands on an issue—any issue—ask that legislator. If you want a third-party opinion, ask me; I'll be happy to share mine. You can reach any of us in Salem, toll-free, by calling 1-800-327-7389.

Gail R. Shibley
State Representative
District 12

Pondering change

To the Editor:

I applaud your sensitive, perceptive article on new Oregon House member George Eighmey. It is an outstanding piece of journalism. It's a shame you felt compelled to sensationalize it with the headline "New Queer in the House."

I know that some gay activists promote the dubious theory that by embracing the derogatory word "queer" we can somehow defuse it and make it less spiteful. But that gay-bashing word is still offensive to many mainstream lesbians and gays. And when we call ourselves "queers" in our gay publications it bewilders our straight friends, and it brings amused, contemptuous smirks to the faces of our enemies.

We should also bear in mind that insulting words such as "queer" are also offensive to most straight Americans [*sic*]. These words are concrete examples of the bigotry that is focused on lesbians and gay men. When we appear to embrace these words we are depriving ourselves of a valuable weapon in our fight against bigotry.

Finally, what is it about the word "queer" that makes it somehow acceptable to you, whereas the other gay-bashing words are apparently unacceptable? I mean, when the next lesbian or gay man is elected to the Legislature, your headline won't read "Another Pervert in the House," will it? And you wouldn't seriously consider changing your publication's name to "The Faggot Forum" or "The Pansy Press," would you?

I rest my case.

Elton Carlsdale
Salem

TRANSITIONS



William E. Borenon

A memorial service will be held for William E. Boren on July 25, at 6 pm, at the Potter's House, 3830 SE 62nd St. (between Powell and Foster). All who have been touched by his loving spirit are asked to attend.

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