

Death with Dignity Act slated for Nov. ballot

A petition to legalize physician-assisted suicide for people with terminal diseases in Oregon has been filed with the Secretary of State's office. Organizers hope to have the "Death with Dignity Act" on the Nov. 1994 ballot.

If passed, the measure would allow adults in Oregon with a terminal illness to make a written request for medication "for the purpose of ending his or her life in a humane and dignified manner."

Two witnesses must sign the written form, attesting to the patient's sound mind and the absence of duress or undue influence. The measure includes safeguards against misuse, with requirements that the physician refer the patient for mental health counseling if appropriate and that two doctors confirm the terminal-disease diagnosis.

OCA pushes local measures for 1994 elections

The Oregon Citizens Alliance turned in enough signatures last month to put a discriminatory measure on the Marion County ballot for the March 22 election. The measure is similar to those passed in 15 Oregon cities and counties since Measure 9 was defeated in the Nov. 1992 election.



Meanwhile, anti-gay groups in Multnomah County and Gresham are gathering signatures to attempt to put discriminatory measures on the ballots.

A measure was filed in Multnomah County on Dec. 10. The sponsor, Paul deParrie, said the measure is an independent effort and not affiliated with the OCA. DeParrie is an anti-abortion activist and the editor of a pro-life publication. Petitioners have to collect about 14,000 signatures to put the measure on the ballot. The Multnomah County Commission will challenge the measure in court.

In Gresham, the OCA is gathering the 1,260 signatures they need to put a measure on the May 17 ballot. If they succeed, Gresham will be the largest city in Oregon to hold an election on an OCA-sponsored discriminatory measure since

Measure 9.

Also in March, Junction City will vote for a second time on an OCA-sponsored measure. The measure originally passed by one vote last June, but a judge threw out those results after two people admitted they voted for it even though they lived outside the city.

Oregon civil rights agenda set

Labor Commissioner Mary Wendy Roberts accepted recommendations for an Oregon civil rights agenda from the Oregon Council on Civil Rights.

Civil rights for lesbians and gay men is included in the council's report of the most pressing issues in Oregon. The council, chaired by Rodney Page of Ecumenical Ministries, pointed to stopping hate crimes, respect for cultural differences, enforcement of civil rights laws, services for English-as-a-second-language learners and ending discrimination in schools as important areas.

To meet these goals, the council recommended action in four areas: develop outreach programs; create human rights organizations throughout the state; initiate legislation or policies that protect the civil rights of all Oregonians; and improve the ease of enforcing civil rights and reporting violations.

"This report clearly illustrates that there is much work to be done in the pursuit of justice and equality in our state," Page said.

Roberts and Page set a statewide conference to develop an action plan for April 7.

The report stems from the council's April 1992 "Civil Rights 2000" conference and a series of public hearings held around the state from Nov. 1992 through Feb. 1993. Members of the council were appointed by Roberts and are recognized leaders and advocates who represent a broad range of civil and human rights concerns.

Medford anti-gay rights measure upheld

A Jackson County judge upheld Medford's discriminatory measure last month, saying that House Bill 3500, which prohibits the passage of discriminatory laws based on sexual orientation, is too broad.

The decision came one week after another Jackson County judge imposed a permanent injunction against the county's discriminatory measure, saying it violated the house bill.

In the Dec. 22 ruling on the Medford case, Judge L.A. Merryman said that HB 3500 is "overbroad" in scope because it does not invalidate all laws regarding sexual "preference." He said, for example, that pedophilia is a "preference" that is still prohibited despite the house bill.

Merryman also ruled that the discriminatory measure does not violate the State or Federal Constitution.

The American Civil Liberties Union, which argued the case against the measure, said it will appeal the decision.

Charles Hinkle, coordinating attorney with the ACLU, said the judge's ruling was unusual because his reasonings were never brought up in court. Before the trial, Medford city attorney Eugene Hart conceded to Merryman in a written statement that HB 3500 invalidated the measure. "[The ACLU attorney] argues that the measure is invalid under Oregon Laws. I do not believe that I can make any respectable legal argument to the contrary," the statement said. Merryman disregarded the statement and formed his own legal conclusions, Hinkle said. Attorney Phil Arnold argued the case for the ACLU.

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