

The OCA loses big, again

House Bill 3500, which blocks the enforcement of local discriminatory ordinances based on sexual orientation, was upheld by a Marion County Circuit Court judge on Feb. 8.

Judge Albin W. Norblad decided that the Oregon Legislature has a constitutional right to "pre-empt," or to declare void before becoming law, measures in cities and counties regarding a "substantive social issue."

"All one has to do today is read the newspapers and watch television to determine the substantive nature of the issue of homosexual rights," Norblad wrote in his ruling. "There is no doubt but that the Legislature has the right to, and did, pre-empt this area."

The law was being challenged by Lon Mabon, Paul DeParrie and Henry Kane. They all claimed the law infringed on their freedom of speech through the initiative and election process.

Charles Hinkle, who argued the case on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union, which joined the state of Oregon in defending the law, said this is a landmark decision for the battle over civil rights for sexual minorities in Oregon.

"The OCA has suffered a major setback," Hinkle said.

Lon Mabon, chairman of the Oregon Citizens Alliance, said he would appeal the decision.

The state Legislature passed HB 3500 last August. It blocks city and county measures that would prohibit the passage of civil rights guarantees for sexual minorities. Elections can still be held on those measures, but they cannot legally be implemented because of HB 3500.

Since Measure 9 was defeated in November 1992, voters in 15 cities and counties have passed discriminatory measures that were backed by the OCA.

In his decision, Norblad also said that Oregon law permits cities and counties to extend civil rights protection to sexual minorities. Portland, Corvallis and Ashland currently have such protections.

Julie Davis, executive director of the Support Our Communities Political Action Committee, said the decision is a mixed bag for civil rights for sexual minorities in Oregon.

"It's a good tone that's being set by House Bill 3500, in that we shouldn't have different policies in different places in Oregon," she said, adding that the decision reflects how most Oregon residents feel about civil rights.

Despite the decision, the OCA can still put discriminatory measures on local ballots and, if those measures pass, create the illusion that voters support the OCA, Davis said.

"We're still going to have to continue running campaigns in all the local elections," she said.

The decision does not have any legal effect on the current statewide campaign launched by the OCA to put a discriminatory measure on the Oregon ballot in 1994.

Gay and Lesbian Pride set for July 5

The 1994 Gay and Lesbian Pride parade and rally has been set for July 9, said Eric Brown, interim chair of Stonewall Northwest-Gay and Lesbian Pride, which is organizing the event.

The celebration is set for later than past years because of lack of early coordination and funds, Brown said. The parade is usually held in June to coincide with the national celebration of Pride.

Because of the lack of early planning, Waterfront Park could not be reserved for the post-parade rally, as it has been in past years. Brown said that the rally will probably take place in the North Park Blocks this year. The group is still planning the final parade route.

Brown was named interim chair at the planning meeting on Feb. 2. The past chair of Stonewall Northwest was relieved of his duties. Brown was the co-chair of the 1992 Gay and Lesbian Pride celebration and was on the No on Hate steering committee. He is the secretary of the Gay Men's Community Project.

An outdoor dance in the North Park Blocks is slated for the night of July 8, Brown said.

Stonewall Northwest was founded last year to plan Gay and Lesbian Pride in the years to come. The group is now trying to establish a consistent structure for the future.

Stonewall Northwest is looking for volunteers to help plan the celebration and to make donations. To be a part of Gay and Lesbian Pride in 1994, call 295-9788.

More anti-Semitism on Lewis and Clark campus

Four different pieces of literature that deny the Holocaust ever happened were found on bulletin boards at Lewis and Clark's Northwestern School of Law campus on Feb. 1, 2 and 3.

Kris Olson Rogers, associate dean for academic affairs of the law school, issued a statement on Feb. 1 denouncing the postings, saying the action "obviously has an effect on members of the targeted groups' ability to concentrate on their studies and creates an environment of hostility and fear."

The postings were reprinted articles from publications. One article claimed that the Holocaust was "invented" by the Jewish head of the Soviet KGB secret police. Another claimed that "organized Jewry issued a 'declaration of economic war' against Germany in 1933 and launched a worldwide boycott against the purchase of German products," and that Hitler's government was simply responding to this legitimate threat.

Another flyer had been found on campus three weeks earlier. That one claimed that "thousands of little children" have been abducted by Jewish people and then sacrificed in "satanic Jew rituals."

In early February for the past few years, Rogers said that similar flyers espousing this "revisionist" theory of the Holocaust have been found. In years past, the flyers stopped appearing after several weeks.

Debra Hagler, president of the school's Jewish Legal Society, said that the group plans to circulate a petition among students about learning respect and tolerance. "We want to move this into being about showing respect and tolerance, rather than just an anti-Semitic issue," Hagler said.

It's not known who has been distributing the literature, Rogers said. A couple of conservative groups have formed on campus in the past years that may fuel some anti-Semitism, she said. No connection has been traced between the groups and the posted material.

If the people who have posted the literature are caught, they may be punished under the school's Honor Code, which states that each student is assured "an opportunity to enjoy rights of personal and intellectual freedom in an atmosphere of mutual respect."

Hagler said that people do have a freedom of speech and expression in the United States, but that that freedom becomes sketchy when it "creates an atmosphere of fear and discomfort."

Compiled by Pamela Lyons

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