

Friends in court

The State of Oregon weighs in on the Amendment 2 debate

by Inga Sorensen

Saying that Oregon voters have a right to see some resolve on the issue of gay and lesbian rights, state officials are drafting an amicus brief to be considered by the nation's highest court.

"From a legal standpoint, this is a real opportunity for us to see some closure on this issue. No other state has the extensive history Oregon has when it comes to anti-gay rights initiatives," says Marla Rae, a spokeswoman for the state attorney general's office. "We think the [U.S. Supreme Court] should have an opportunity to learn and reflect upon our experiences here."

The high court is currently considering *Romer vs. Evans*, a Colorado case involving Amendment 2, a statewide initiative approved by voters in 1992. The measure, which the Colorado Supreme Court has overturned, prohibits the enactment of lesbian and gay rights ordinances. Opponents maintain Amendment 2 excludes gay men and lesbians from full participation in the political process.

Earlier this month, Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber announced he has asked Attorney General Ted Kulongoski to file an amicus, or friend-of-the-court, brief opposing Amendment 2. Such briefs are filed by individuals, organizations or government agencies who claim to have an interest in the case and information of value to the court. Information in these briefs may assist justices by presenting an argument or point of law that the parties in the case have not raised. Friend-of-the-court briefs are also often designed to "pressure" the court to reach a particular decision.

Oregon is the only state opposing Amendment 2, while Alabama, Idaho and Virginia have signaled that they will back the state of Colorado in this case.

"It seems to me that the governor really made up his mind to do this on his own," says state Rep. George Eighmey (D-Portland). "He came to me and other [gay and lesbian state lawmakers] and asked whether we would support his decision to do this. Needless to say, we are absolutely delighted—but I have to admit that I thought to myself: 'Why didn't we think of that?'"

Both Kitzhaber and Kulongoski are longtime supporters of gay and lesbian rights. Kitzhaber, who has been very vocal in his opposition to the discriminatory initiatives sponsored by the Oregon Citizens Alliance, says Amendment 2 is "clearly a violation of constitutional rights."

"We met with the governor in early March to talk about proactive gay rights legislation we're currently working on," explains Greg Jackson, executive director of Right To Privacy, a statewide gay and lesbian rights group. "During that conversation Gov. Kitzhaber asked us whether we felt it was OK to file the amicus brief. We said absolutely."

"I was mildly surprised by the governor's announcement, because quite frankly, this is not something he had to do," says William Lunch, a political commentator for Oregon Public Broadcasting. "The more standard and perhaps more political speculation is that the gay community is by and large viewed as a strong backer of the Democratic Party and it's pay-back time, [but] I would guess that he's doing this because he believes it's right."

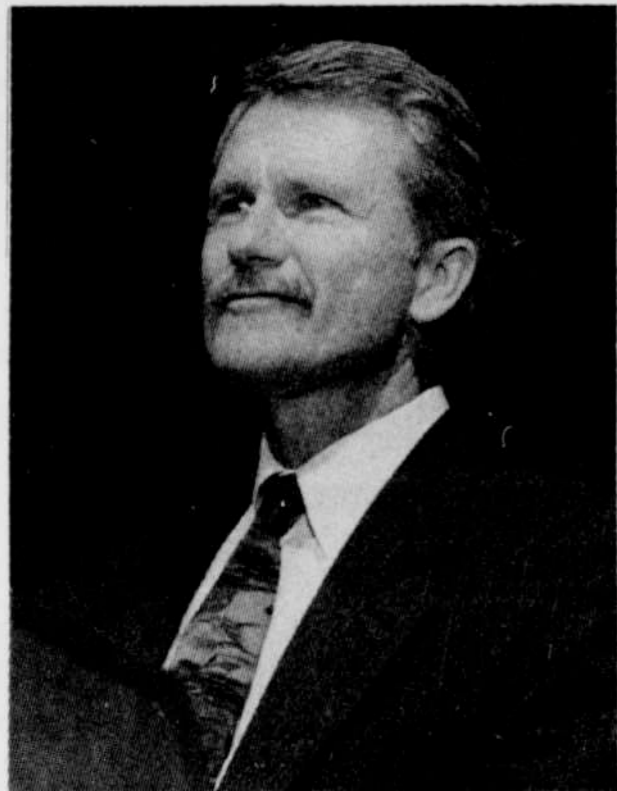
Jackson adds: "Not only does the governor believe this is the ethically right thing to do, he also realizes that a lot of money has already been wasted because of these initiatives—money that could be used for social services and other important things.... We have learned a lot from these seven years of attacks on gay men and lesbians."

Oregon voters began considering initiatives targeting gay men and lesbians in 1988, when

the then-fledgling OCA successfully persuaded citizens to repeal a state executive order barring discrimination based on sexual orientation in state governmental practices. In 1992 and 1994, citizens voted down proposed state constitutional amendments that targeted gay men and lesbians. Additionally, citizens in more than two dozen Oregon communities have considered local initiatives during the past couple of years, and more statewide initiatives targeting lesbians and gay men are poised for the 1996 general election ballot.

"No other state has faced three statewide elections dealing with anti-gay initiatives. We have an unfortunate but unique interest in what happens with *Romer vs. Evans*," says state Rep. Gail Shibley (D-Portland), adding tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars have been spent on legal challenges stemming from these initiatives.

Rae estimates that it will cost between \$8,000 and \$9,000 to prepare the brief, which will be submitted to the Supreme Court in June.



John Kitzhaber



gazelle
NATURAL FIBRE CLOTHING

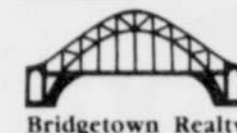
DOWNTOWN 733 SW Alder 228-1693
Open Daily
EASTSIDE 4100 NE Fremont 288-3422

I simply do it better!

Whether it's listening to your wants and needs, developing a presentation of properties, or negotiating your transaction, be assured that your satisfaction is my ultimate objective. Call me at Bridgetown Realty — because there is a difference.



Donald Falk
Million Dollar Producer



Bridgetown Realty
(503) 287-9370
(503) 655-8015



MY MISSION



BOBBIE SHATTO
Personal Financial Advisor



...is to help clients achieve their financial objectives. As an advisor my role is to educate and motivate them to take the actions necessary to reach those financial goals.

Planning for...

- ESTATE
- RETIREMENT
- ACCUMULATION
- BUSINESS

(503) 255-4900
(360) 694-3117

Portland Spirit

CRUISE SCHEDULE:

- Wednesday, April 19 - 25
 - Daily Dinners
- Friday, April 21
 - Lunch
- Friday, April 21
 - Dance Cruise
- Wednesday, April 26
 - Secretary's Lunch



- Sunday, April 23 - Active Singles Dance Cruise
- Friday, April 28 - Affection Connection Dance Cruise



503-224-3900

SEE US FOR ALL YOUR COLLISION REPAIR NEEDS

Ferguson
AUTOBODY

(503) 232-3600

2454 E. BURNSIDE • PORTLAND, OR 97214

Family Owned & Operated Since 1952

