

local news

White House no-show?

Oregon lawmakers may be unable to accept an invitation to meet with officials of the Clinton administration

by Inga Sorensen

Oregon's four openly lesbian and gay state legislators have been invited to the White House to meet with senior Clinton administration officials on June 13. Expect the contingent to be a no-show, however, due to a scheduling conflict that will likely keep lawmakers in Salem.

"There's a good chance we'll still be in session, which is unfortunate, because I think it would be great to meet with other gay and lesbian public officials," says George Eighmey, one of those invited to the meeting. "But it's disappointing that the president won't be there. It makes you wonder if he's serious about this."

Kathleen DeBold of the Victory Fund, a national organization that raises funds to assist selected gay and lesbian candidates in getting elected to public office, says 85 gay and lesbian elected officials have been invited to Washington, D.C., including Oregon state Reps. Gail Shibley and George Eighmey, both Democrats from Portland, Rep. Cynthia Wooten (D-Eugene), and Republican state Rep. Chuck Carpenter of Portland.

Organizers say the gathering will mark the first time in U.S. history

that the White House has scheduled a meeting specifically with gay and lesbian elected officials, though neither President Bill Clinton nor Vice President Al Gore are expected to participate.

"This is going to be a working meeting—not a photo op. Administration officials will be sitting down with gay and lesbian officials to discuss substantive matters like reauthorization of the Ryan White CARE Act, gay marriages and domestic partnerships, hate crimes, and other matters critical to our community," says DeBold, who could not name any senior administration officials who are expected to attend the gathering. "We're still working on that. I know people would like to meet with [Health and Human Services Secretary] Donna Shalala and [Attorney General] Janet Reno, but I don't know if that's possible."

The fact that no high profile administration official has thus far committed to attend has some questioning whether Clinton is simply trying to score some badly needed points with a disillu-

sioned gay and lesbian electorate that is frustrated with his handling of sexual minority rights matters—particularly the issue of lesbians and gay men in the military. (The administration continues to challenge court rulings that say it's unconstitutional to bar openly gay and lesbian service members).

"I can see how people might think this meeting is a bunch of bull, but I guess if I were Clinton's advisor, I'd probably tell him not to attend, too, at least if he wants to get re-elected," says Shibley, who worked on Capitol Hill as a legislative aide to Oregon U.S. Rep. Jim Weaver in the early 1980s. "I know he has disappointed a lot of people, but he's better than a President Dole or a President Wilson."

She adds: "If I am able to go, I would emphasize that the administration has to show that there are some benefits to being a 'Friend of Bill.' If Bill is

constantly taking his supporters for granted and willing to compromise with those who are philosophically opposed to him on human rights issues, then he'll continue to be stuck between the proverbial dock and ship. You have to make tough choices sometimes. You can't have it both ways."

Terry Bean, an Oregon resident and Victory Fund co-founder says, "I think the whole military fiasco really tainted many people's views about Clinton, but the fact remains that he has done more for us than any other president in history. He continues to fight for AIDS funding. He has quietly outlawed discrimination based on sexual orientation in federal agencies. There are now more than two dozen openly gay and lesbian staffers working for the president. It's unprecedented." Bean also says he was among several gay and lesbian activists who recently met with Gore and his wife, Tipper, at the vice president's home in Washington, D.C.

According to DeBold, gay and lesbian elected officials will also conduct a coordinated series of congressional visits to meet with key legislators. "Our federal lawmakers need to see the faces of gay men and lesbians," she says. "I think it really helps, too, if they see gay men and lesbians who have been elected—by popular vote—to serve their constituents."

Portland observes international AIDS event

Portland will join more than 230 cities in 40 nations in observance of the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial and Mobilization on May 21.

This year marks the 12th anniversary of the world's largest annual community-based AIDS event. The vigil is designed as a remembrance to those who have died of AIDS complications and to show support for those living with HIV and AIDS.

The Portland observance will be hosted by the Community AIDS Network. It will be held at 7:30 pm at the First Congregational Church, 1126 SW



Park Ave. For further information, call Gary McInnis at the HIV Day Center at 223-3444.

Out on Broadway hosts stroll on the strip

Gay and lesbian-owned businesses along Northeast Broadway in Portland have formed a new business association called Out on Broadway.

The group is hosting The Broadway Stroll on May 21 from 11 am to 5 pm. More than 25 businesses located on Broadway between 7th and 33rd avenues plan to participate in the event, which is designed to support all businesses on that strip.

One of the goals of Out on Broadway is to promote the diverse businesses located along Northeast Broadway to the gay and lesbian communities.

Compiled by Inga Sorensen

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