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since 1983

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Ad policy. No sexually exploitative advertising will be accepted. Compensation for errors in, or cancellation of, advertising will be made with credit toward future advertising.

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steppin' out



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

Pride Northwest sponsored a National Coming Out Day event Oct. 11 at Pioneer Courthouse Square. Organizers estimate nearly 2,000 people attended the festivities.

editorial

Shaken confidence

After the Defense of Marriage Act fiasco, queer voters are finding it hard to support political allies previously perceived as "staunch"

by Renée LaChance

Despite the nationwide lack of anti-gay initiatives, this has been a lively political season in regard to the gay and lesbian community. Early on, the Grand Old Party devised a plan that would drive a wedge between Democrats and the queer community and serve as a lightning rod for debate and controversy—the Defense of Marriage Act.

For those of you out of the political know: The Republicans submitted the Defense of Marriage Act to Congress in response to the possibility that Hawaii might soon legitimize same-sex marriage. DOMA allows states to disregard same-sex marriages performed in other states, and precludes federal spousal benefits typically afforded people in a heterosexual union. It defines "marriage" as a formal union between a man and a woman. The bill was approved by the House on July 12 by a 342-67 margin; the Senate approved it last month, and President Clinton signed it into law Sept. 21.

Polls indicate that "Middle America" does not support same-sex marriage. Democrats who had been allies to the sexual minorities community found themselves besieged by the better-organized right wing to vote for DOMA. We queers assumed we had our allies in our pockets and did not voice the importance of this vote to them until it was too late.

Some of our nongay political allies held firm against the GOP's plot without our prodding; Rep. Peter DeFazio is a shining example. Some of our perceived allies took the low road to save their political skins, like Reps. Elizabeth Furse and Earl Blumenauer, which stunned many of us—in Blumenauer's case especially, since he is running in an extremely liberal district.

Now there are two camps among the activists in our community: those who want to send a warning shot, by not supporting them in this election, to the politicians who won our support over the years only to stab us in the collective back, and those

who say this wasn't that important an issue and certainly not one that warrants throwing away votes.

Just one day after the DOMA vote, at the then-Right to Privacy's Garden Party, Blumenauer and Furse were questioned by *Just Out* reporter Inga Sorensen about their "yes" votes.

Blumenauer said, "The picture of marriage that I have in my mind is of a man and a woman."

Furse was defensive and argumentative and had only vague answers to Inga's questions. It was obvious that the two had no ready responses to put a positive spin on their decisions.

Nevertheless, both earned a good rating with the Human Rights Campaign regarding their record on issues of importance to the lesbian and gay community. Furse scored 89 out of a possible 100, and Blumenauer scored 83. (DeFazio had a perfect score.)

It's no joy to say it, but that's good enough to keep our support. We're endorsing Furse and Blumenauer for the Nov. 5 election because of their overall record. If they are elected, we'll watch their legislative actions with a critical eye, and reconsider our endorsement in 1998.

Now in regard to Bill Clinton, whom we endorsed in the primary: Yes, he screwed us on his "gays in the military" pledge. Yes, he screwed us when he fired Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders. Yes, he screwed us by not instructing the attorney general to submit an amicus brief to the Supreme Court urging it to overturn Colorado's Amendment 2. Yes, he screwed us on the Defense of Marriage Act.

So why vote for him? See if you can answer yes to this question: "Can I wake up the morning of Nov. 6 with Bob Dole as president and live with myself for the next four years knowing I didn't vote for Clinton?"

I can't.

You'll find our complete list of endorsements on page 15.

contents

VOL. 13 NO. 24 OCTOBER 18, 1996

FEATURES

Power play

Hopes for a national women's basketball league rest in part on the sinewy shoulders of the 10 women of Portland Power
(p. 19)

Vote on it

Just Out's endorsements for Nov. 5
(p. 15)

DEPARTMENTS

World news

A Taiwanese mayor will officiate at a gay wedding
(p. 4)

National news

Melinda Paras resigns from NGLTF; the U.S. Navy denies the clemency appeal of a seaman convicted of bias-related murder
(pp. 5-7)

Local news

BOLI will investigate discrimination claims based on transsexualism; cable TV crew comes to Portland to get a take on gay and lesbian families
(pp. 10-13)

COLUMNS

Reasons to hope

Immune-based therapies represent a new frontier in HIV/AIDS research
(p. 9)

ARTS

Theater

Jefferson Beeker gives a behind-the-curtain look at his play First Couple
(p. 31)

Music

Disco diva France Joli is back in "Touch"; Cowgirl Sweethearts sing with a topical twang
(pp. 33-34)

Entertainment

Sonic boom: 300 bands converge for North by Northwest; Ysaya Barnwell sings with Aurora Chorus and satori
(p. 35)

Cinema

A Beautiful Thing transpires at Cinema 21; Jennifer Tilly is Bound and determined
(pp. 37-38)