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The **display advertising** deadline is the Monday after the first and third Friday for the next issue.

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steppin' out



Sara Duffus, as Dental Dame, and Dustin Simpson, as Condom Caper, both members of Outside In's Gorilla Theatre, were part of a Valentine's Day event at Pioneer Courthouse Square held to raise funds for the troupe. Claudia Webster (center), HIV education manager for the Oregon Health Division, was one of those paying a small fee to have her picture taken with the dynamic duo. Purchasers received their instant photos in condom-decorated Valentines made by troupe members. The young woman wielding the Polaroid camera is Corey James.

editorial

Wed alert

Sen. Marilyn Shannon has introduced legislation that would ban same-sex marriages in Oregon

by Renée LaChance

As we went to press, Oregon state Sen. Marilyn Shannon, a Salem Republican, introduced Senate Bill 577, which would prohibit equal marriage rights for same-gender couples.

Like its federal predecessor, the measure, introduced Feb. 18, is dubbed the Defense of Marriage Act, and defines marriage as the union between a man and woman. It also says same-sex marriages performed elsewhere would not be recognized in Oregon.

Sen. Shannon is chief sponsor of the bill; its cosponsors are Sen. Bob Kintigh (R-Springfield) and Reps. Charles Starr (R-Hillsboro) and Ron Sunseri (R-Gresham).

Given the composition of the Senate—Republicans dominate 20 to 10—it can be expected SB 577 will sail through that chamber with little difficulty.

Republicans also control the House, albeit by a much tighter margin, 31 to 29. There is a solid chance the measure will gain that chamber's approval as well.

Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber's chief spokesman, Bob Applegate, says the governor has not seen the bill nor has he taken a position on the issue. Applegate says he does not know whether Kitzhaber supports extending equal marriage rights to same-sex couples.

Kitzhaber's colleague to the north, Washington Democratic Gov. Gary Locke, meanwhile, has vowed to veto a similar bill passed by the state Legislature there a few days prior to Shannon's action. (See story on page 12.)

Thirty-seven states have considered similar legislation: It has passed in 17.

Applying the same strategy used by Washington lawmakers, Shannon, sources say, has a second anti-same-sex marriage bill waiting in the wings which resembles SB 577 except that it includes a referendum clause, meaning that if passed it circumvents a gubernatorial veto and goes directly to the people for a vote.

Sen. Shannon's bill is divisive legislation that is a waste of

time and energy since it serves no real purpose. Lesbians and gay men are already denied the right to marry in every state in the nation. Although recent court decisions have moved Hawaii closer to allowing same-sex marriages, its Legislature is working to change state law to keep that from happening.

It doesn't matter whether you support or oppose getting married. It doesn't matter whether you would take advantage of the right to marry if it were offered you. This fight isn't about marriage. Lesbian and gay couples marry now, by honoring their relationships and their commitments to one another with ceremonies attended by friends and family.

This fight is for the nearly 700 civil rights that are immediately available to a man and woman who enter into a state-sanctioned marriage. Some of these rights pertain to inheritance, hospital visitation, domestic violence protections, bereavement leave, burial determination, child custody, insurance discounts, joint adoption and foster care, joint parenting, sick leave to care for a spouse, tax benefits, and survivor benefits. It is plain discrimination that lesbians and gay men who choose to marry and make a public commitment to one another are denied these rights.

That's what we are fighting for. This is the message we need to send loud and clear to Oregon's senators, representatives and governor.

Act now. Call your senator and representative and urge them to vote against this legislation and ask them to do everything in their power to keep it from getting out of committee. (At press time SB 577 had not received a committee assignment.) Call Gov. Kitzhaber and urge him to veto the bill should it cross his desk. The Oregon Legislative Hot line number is 1-800-332-2313. The number for Gov. Kitzhaber's office is (503) 378-3111.

If you want to get involved with an organization working to fight this legislation, contact the Oregon Freedom to Marry Coalition at 228-3892 or Right to Pride at 228-5825.

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