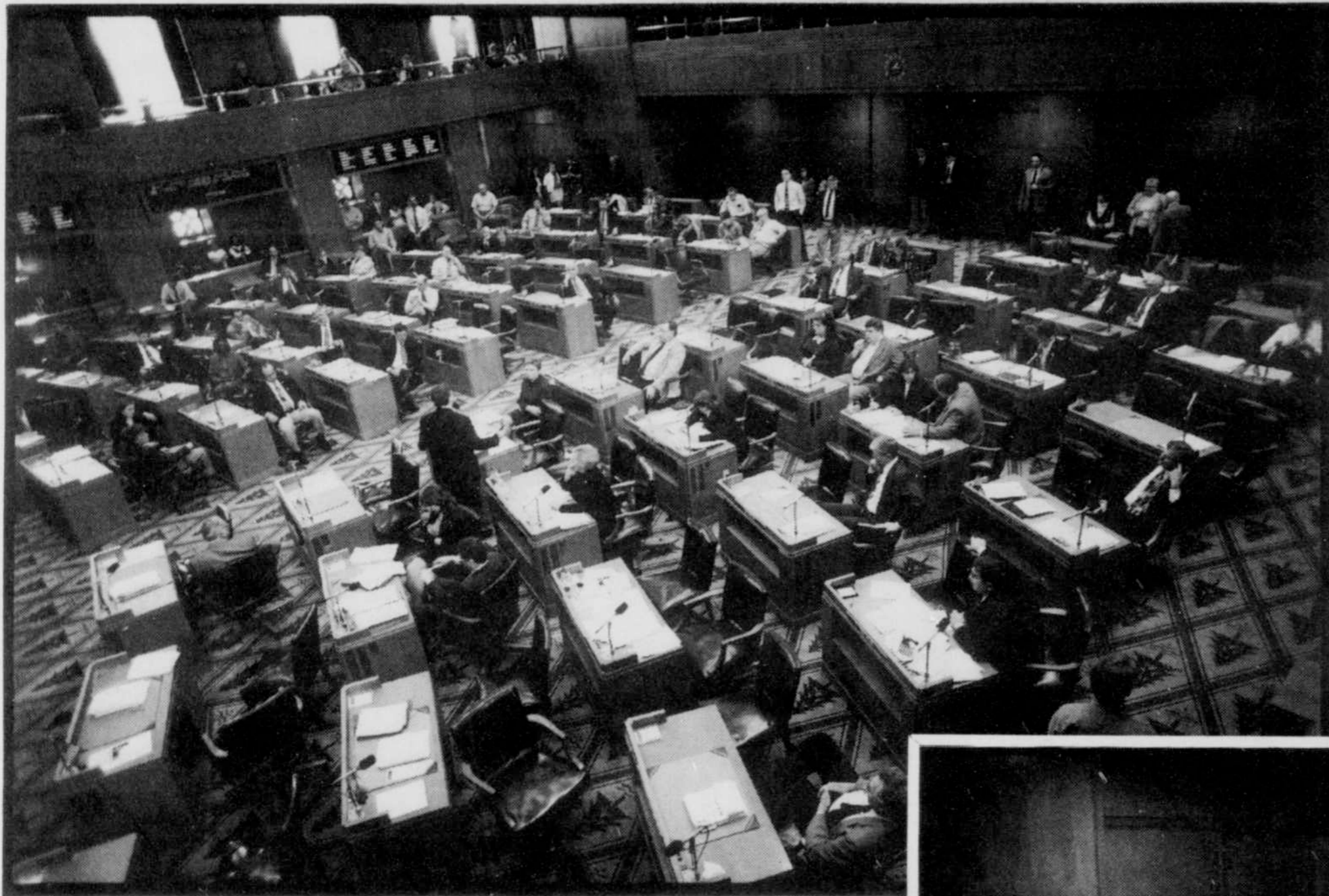


ACHIEVING THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

Lesbians and gay men in Oregon have been working to get job protections since 1973—on April 29 they got halfway there
by Inga Sorensen ▼ photos by Linda Kliever



about 15 minutes ranting and raving about the homosexual agenda," laughs Pack.

Obviously to no avail.

While the floor vote went hitch-free, getting there was no easy feat.

HB3719 is actually a replica of HB2734, which was foundering in the House Judiciary Committee, chaired by the far-from-gay-rights-friendly John Minnis, a Republican from Wood Village. (Not surprisingly, Minnis voted against HB3719.)

When it appeared HB2734 would die in committee, Carpenter initiated some political hardball by employing a parliamentary maneuver that brought the House to a standstill for nearly two days.

Carpenter, who knew he had a majority of votes to pass his bill, motioned to move HB2734 from Judiciary to the floor for a vote. Carpenter, Rep. Jim Hill (R-Hillsboro) and all 29 House Democrats were set to back the motion, which was brought April 14.

In an effort to avoid an embarrassing defeat, Republican leadership adjourned, meaning the motion died. Carpenter could have renewed the motion the following day. However, he didn't need to because the parties reached a compromise: HB2734 would remain in Judiciary, but a nearly identical bill would be crafted and sent to the House Commerce Committee, where it would see some action.



Call it a week for history making. Ellen comes out big time on prime time; closer to home, the Oregon House of Representatives approves Oregon ENDA, legislation prohibiting employment discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"In 1993, we got the bill through the Senate, but it hit a major wall in the House," says an exuberant albeit exhausted Barry Pack, executive director of Right to Pride, a statewide gay, lesbian and bisexual rights group that has aggressively lobbied for such legislation during the past several years.

"This is the first time ever the bill has made it through the House, and it went very smoothly. Nothing weird happened," says Pack, referring to the April 29 floor debate and 40-20 vote.

Twelve of 31 Republicans and 28 of 29 Democrats favored House Bill 3719, which bars discrimination in the workplace on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Oregon Rep. Larry Sowa, whom Pack describes as very conservative, was the only Democrat to vote against the bill, which was sponsored by openly gay Republican Rep. Chuck Carpenter.

"We thought we had all the Democrats, but I guess not," says Pack. "We're still extremely pleased because we received support from Republicans from rural areas."

Republicans like John Watt from the Medford area, Ken Strobeck of Beaverton, Jeff Kruse of Roseburg, Eldon Johnson of Central Point, and Lane Shetterly of Dallas.

"Of course, Charles Starr [R-Hillsboro] spent



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