

RTP dinner to honor Work, PFLAG

Right to Pride will honor central Oregon activist Elli Work and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays at the 16th Annual RTP Dinner on Oct. 4.

Work will receive the Sanford Director Award and PFLAG will be honored with the Right to Pride Award.

The Sanford Director Award, named in memory of a former RTP board member and community activist, is given each year to a "member of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community who on a statewide or community level provides



Elli Work

outstanding leadership in securing equal rights."

Work helped found the Deschutes County Coalition for Human Dignity and has served as its chair for a number of years.

She made headlines in 1993 by testifying in support of nondiscrimination legislation before the state Senate Judiciary Committee as a uniformed, openly lesbian member of the Oregon National Guard.

She subsequently challenged discharge proceedings and continues to serve her country openly. In 1996 Work unsuccessfully ran for a state House seat, but may try again in 1998.

The Right to Pride Award, RTP's highest honor, is given to an individual or organization who "consistently exemplifies outstanding commitment and support for gay and lesbian civil and human rights."

The honor was first bestowed in 1981 to Portland City Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury. Portland Mayor Vera Katz and former Gov. Barbara Roberts are among those who have since received the award.

The first chapter of PFLAG in Oregon was founded in 1981 by Bill and Ann Shepherd and Charles and Rita Knapp. Since then Oregon PFLAG has developed 18 affiliates across the state and meets monthly to provide support for parents and family members of gay men and lesbians.

In addition, many PFLAG members have been dedicated volunteers opposing anti-gay ballot measures and supporting legislative efforts to eradicate discrimination based on sexual orientation.

PFLAG members have served on Gov. John Kitzhaber's Task Force on Youth Suicide Prevention and lobbied extensively for Oregon's Employment Non-Discrimination Act in Salem. Activities vary by chapter, from working with local school districts for understanding of youth issues to serving as spokespeople and educators to community groups and organizations.

RTP is Oregon's oldest lesbian, gay and bisexual civil rights organization. Formed in 1981, it backs candidates and campaigns supporting full equality for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals and lobbies state and local government for nondiscrimination laws and other legislation.

RTP's political action committee contributes as much as \$100,000 an election cycle to candidates who support full equality.

The RTP Dinner will be held Oct. 4 at the Portland Hilton Hotel Grand Ballroom, 921 SW Sixth Ave. Cocktails are served at 5:30 pm, the dinner begins at 7 pm.

The special guest is comic Marga Gomez; additional entertainment will be provided by From Top to Bottom, a San Francisco-based quintet. Tickets are \$125. For more information or to obtain tickets, call RTP at 228-5825.

Draft ballot title issued

The Oregon secretary of state's office has received a draft ballot title from the attorney general's office for initiative petition No. 50, a proposed statutory amendment that seeks to prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation in Oregon.

The draft ballot title, issued Sept. 9, reads: "Prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

"Result of 'Yes' vote: 'Yes' vote prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment decisions, opportunities, and membership.

"Result of 'No' vote: 'No' vote keeps current, more general, prohibition on discrimination in employment."

The summary reads: "Adopts statute prohibiting employers, employment agencies, labor unions from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation in connection with employment opportunities, employment decisions, membership, or membership privileges. Prohibits interfering in exercise of rights protected by measure. Prohibits retaliation for opposition to practice prohibited by measure or assisting in action brought under measure. Does not require provision of partner benefits, preferential treatment on basis of sexual orientation. Allows regulation of employee workplace conduct. Certain religious organizations may discriminate. Enforceable under current procedures for challenging employment discrimination."

Portland attorney Charles Hinkle, representing the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon, says the wording is too "mushy and vague."

"It doesn't make clear that under current law, it is perfectly legal for employers to fire people based on their sexual orientation," Hinkle says.

He adds that the portion reading "'No' vote keeps current, more general, prohibition on discrimination in employment," may lead one to believe sexual orientation employment protections are currently in place statewide.

"This is already a widely held misperception," says Hinkle, who is drafting alternatives to the wording.

Critics of the draft ballot title may submit their written comments and concerns to the secretary of state's office during an appeals period which ends Sept. 23.

The secretary of state will deliver all written comments to the attorney general, who in turn will certify either the draft ballot title or a revised ballot title no later than the fifth business day after receiving the comments from the secretary of state.

Backers of the nondiscrimination initiative, which is poised for the November 1998 general election ballot, must submit 73,261 valid voter signatures by July 2, 1998.

The prospective initiative petition was submitted on behalf of Basic Rights Oregon, an Oregon human rights group, on Aug. 29 by chief petitioners Cheryl Perrin, senior vice president of public affairs for Fred Meyer Inc., Ron Fortune, executive secretary treasurer of the Northwest Labor Council/AFL-CIO, and BRO co-chair McKinley William.

BRO is currently sponsoring a series of statewide community discussions aimed at getting a pulse on how others feel about the initiative.

For more information, contact Basic Rights Oregon at 222-6151.

Reported by Inga Sorensen

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