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LOCAL news

NOW HEAR THIS

Continued from the cover

All the anti-gay bills before the state House currently sit in the Civil Judiciary Committee and are referrals, meaning if they garner a thumbs up in the Republican-controlled Oregon Legislature, they go directly to the ballot for a vote, thereby circumventing a gubernatorial veto.

BRO's Jean Harris met with House Civil Judiciary Committee chair Lane Shetterly, R-Dallas, and vice chair Max Williams, R-Tigard, on March 25. She says at this point it appears HJR29 is the only measure of the four poised for action.

HJR29 reads, in part: "No law shall be passed granting to any citizen or class of citizens privileges, or immunities, which, upon the same terms, shall not equally belong to all citizens...."

"No provision of this Constitution requires the granting of marriage licenses, rights or benefits to unmarried individuals.... To be valid or recognized in this state, a marriage may consist only of the union of one man and one woman."

"We're vulnerable on the marriage issue," Harris concedes.

Although a hearing date has yet to be solidified, she says, BRO is seeking people, particularly within the business community, to testify against the bill.

"We need to line up support now," she says.

Vicki Walker, a Eugene Democrat who serves on the House Civil Judiciary Committee, would like to sink the anti-Tanner proposals.

"We're doing the best that we can, but it's hard when you're not the majority," she says. "Voters two times have defeated [Oregon Citi-



Inside the legislative chambers in Salem

zens Alliance] measures. It's a waste of time and taxpayer money. It's another attack. [Some lawmakers] have made it their mission to be very mean-spirited."

Walker then promises: "If [extreme conservatives] are just going to shove it down our throats, then I'm gonna give it right back."

In other news, House Bill 2076—the first legislative item dealing with sexual minority issues—spent only minutes on the House floor March 23 before being pushed back into committee.

"The timing wasn't right, mostly," says J.L. Wilson, spokesperson for House Speaker Lynn Snodgrass, R-Damascus.

HB2076 would prohibit the Oregon Health Plan from paying for sex-reassignment surgery. (Some say the measure is unnecessary given the Oregon Health Services Commission's Feb. 25

vote to exclude sex-reassignment surgery from the list of treatments covered by the Oregon Health Plan.)

For pundits and activists alike, HB2076 would have been a crucial barometer for measuring how the state House might split on controversial social-issue votes.

Wilson says that Snodgrass was surprised the bill made it out of committee so quickly. "[GOP members] agreed at the beginning [of the session], we wouldn't take on social issues so early on," he explains.

There's no word on how long the House Human Resources Committee will sit on the sex-change bill; it may simply allow the legislation to languish and die.

■ To get involved in the legislative goings-on, contact BASIC RIGHTS OREGON at 222-6151.

PLUGGING INTO MR. MABON

Wondering what's up with Lon Mabon? OK, maybe not, but we'll tell you anyway.

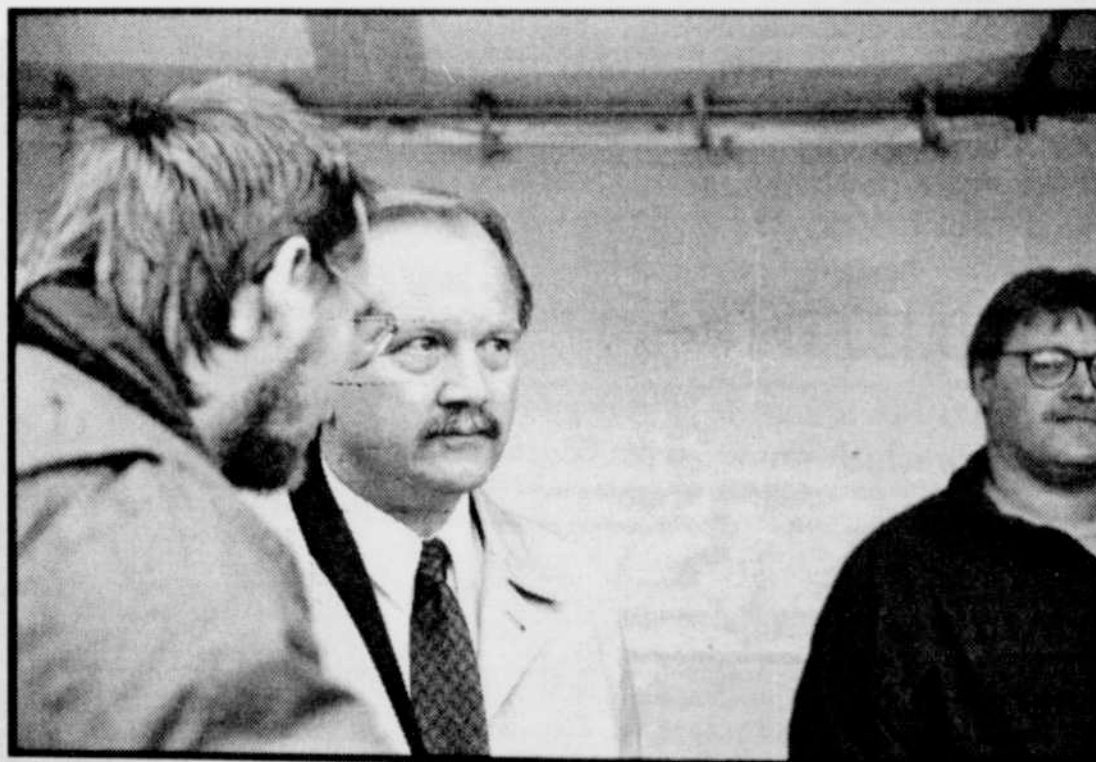
Seems the Oregon Citizens Alliance leader, known for orchestrating anti-gay-rights campaigns—including two new anti-gay initiatives aimed at the November 2000 ballot—is on tap to speak before one of the Bonneville Power Administration employee organizations: the Christian Values Resource Group.

Judi Johansen, administrator and chief executive officer at BPA, which is part of the U.S. government's Department of Energy, issued a March 16 memo to all employees saying BPA "is proud of its Christian Values Resource Group and the cultural richness and diversity they bring to the workforce. By Diversity Office proclamation, April is designated for programs sponsored by the CVRG."

Those activities include Mabon's scheduled April 20 chat titled *God's Sovereignty and the Implications for Us*. The noon presentation will be held at BPA's headquarters in Portland.

In keeping with tradition, Mabon's slated appearance is causing a stir among some employees, including Tina Conover, who has worked for BPA for a dozen years. She is also a member of BPA's sexual minorities resource group.

Conover, 40, lives in Vancouver, Wash., with her female partner. They have five "really well-adjusted, happy kids."



Lon Mabon
(center)

Conover, a BPA office manager, says she's heard the free-speech pitch from some co-workers, but she nonetheless finds it highly disconcerting that Mabon is coming into her workplace with his offerings.

"He's such a hateful man," she says.

Karen DeLano, president of the gay resource group, adds she's "appalled and offended" by it all, but notes she wouldn't want speakers sponsored by her group to be blocked from appearing at BPA.

The always-sparkling Darcelle; human rights activist Kathleen Saadat; and members of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays are among the folks previously brought to BPA by the gay group.

"I'm not thrilled that Mabon's coming, but still..." DeLano says.

Johansen did not respond to *Just Out's* inquiry.

■ Reported by INGA SORENSEN

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