



The Portland Area Business Association

encourages all current and prospective members to attend the monthly luncheon

June 14
11:30 am-noon
Mallory Hotel

(free parking in parking structure)

Election of Officers

and

**Special Guest Speaker
Kathleen Saadat**

Members and guests \$14.50

Reservations must be made by 6/9/99.

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LOCAL news

HERE WE GO AGAIN

Continued from the cover

As *Just Out* went to press, the resolution was poised for House floor action. Under the measure, Oregonians would be asked to vote in a Nov. 2 special election to define marriage as the union between a man and a woman and to invalidate *Tanner vs. OHSU*.

Rep. Randall Edwards, a Portland Democrat, is pushing an alternative measure (via a minority report) which eliminates Mannix's language that the state "must" define marriage as being between one man and one woman, and substitutes the word *may*. The minority report also nixes Mannix's provision that same-sex couples be denied benefits.

GOP Reps. Lane Shetterly of Dallas and Max Williams of Tigard announced that they plan to vote for Edwards' version, not Mannix's, when it comes to the floor. How the Senate will act remains to be seen, but Senate President Brady Adams has said social issues like same-sex marriage are not a priority.

Still, political observers say there's a solid chance an anti-gay measure will make it through the Republican-controlled Legislature to voters. And if it does, you can expect things to heat up—something many of those who testified said they hoped wouldn't happen.

Among them was Christine Tanner, a plaintiff in the *Tanner* case. "You will no doubt recall the series of measures, since 1988, that Oregon voters had to decide on," she told the committee. "For each of those measures, scores of Oregon citizens spent thousands of hours campaigning to prevent legalization of discrimination. We have so many more important issues facing us, issues which do not make enemies of some part of our electorate."

Jimmy and Norma Walters of Tigard, who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this year, told lawmakers one of their three children is a lesbian. Jimmy, a veteran of World War II, Korea and Vietnam, noted how recent editorials in *The Oregonian* and *Eugene Register-Guard* opposed HJR29, saying the *Tanner* decision was a pure application of the constitutional requirement that all citizens receive equal treatment under the law.

"That's all Norma and I ask for our children, equal treatment under the law, not for two of them but all three of our children," he said, adding, "[HJR29] would promote conflicts similar to those occurring during ballot measures 9 and 13."

Proponents of the measure cited the Bible to make their case. Jerry Probst, a Baptist pastor, added, "I believe it's better to be proactive, building the wall before the assault begins."

But state Rep. Anitra Rasmussen, a Portland Democrat, testified: "I find no compelling reason to stand between [same-sex couples] and state-sanctified marriage.... I ask you to turn away from this resolution."

On the Internet, meanwhile, the debate rages. On a Digital City/Portland Web page, which features news and entertainment tidbits about the City of Roses, a poll has been

launched asking the public if it supports banning same-sex marriage in Oregon. The question, which was prompted by HJR29, is accompanied by a picture of two men shown from the waist up. They are holding hands, their backs are to the audience, and they wear no clothing.

When last checked by *Just Out* staff, the vote in favor of the ban had snagged 992 votes, while 883 opposed it, and 34 were undecided.

More than 50 people also posted responses. "Reb" wrote: "I have nothing against gay and lesbian people, but I believe same-sex marriage is a joke. This is your choice. The taxpayers have a heavy enough burden supporting the people we already have. Depend on yourself. Same sex is not a family unit."

But "Geoff" countered: "I think that if gay people aren't allowed the benefits of a legal marriage, they should only be required to pay a certain percent of taxes. They don't have kids

"Let them bring it on. It gives us a chance to pick up more supporters," Harris says, adding that she believes Mannix's version of HJR29 will ultimately be deemed in violation of the state constitution's provision that ballot measures may tackle only one issue. (HJR29 deals with both marriage and benefits.)

Still, she's urging bill detractors to contact their representatives and senators to voice their opposition.

"It's no time to sit back," she says.

BRO is clearly the leading organization battling the measure, but another group may be in the works.

In an e-mail, former state Rep. George Eighmey writes: "If the majority report passes, meaning Kevin Mannix's anti-gay version, I intend to form an organization to fight it. I will need your support and assistance if we are once again faced with an anti-gay measure. There will be other



Oregon Rep. Kevin Mannix testifies in favor of House Joint Resolution 29 during a May 25 hearing

going to school, why should they pay, they can't claim each other in tax season, maybe they should pay 50 percent of the straight couple's amount, sort of a 'gay' exemption! Perfect idea!"

While "Bo" shouted: "If Joe can marry Bob, then can I marry my dog Blaze? It's sensationalism, it's nuts.... I like a male friend better than my wife sometimes, but get real, marriage???"

groups that will be fighting this measure, such as Basic Rights Oregon, however, many of you have informed me that the best way to fight this measure is to hit it head on as discriminatory and mean-spirited."

He adds: "In addition, you have said that we need to have spokespersons who are mainstream instead of from the extreme. I believe we can

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These are sick people, gives me the heebie jeebies.... I feel sorry for them a little, but I sure won't [sic] legitimize their sickness as an acceptable form of behavior any more than marriage between men and boys, or animals, which is the next perversion if we turn our heads on this one."

"Here we go again," says Jean Harris, executive director of Basic Rights Oregon, the group heading up the fight against the anti-gay bills.

She estimates her group will have to raise more than \$2 million to counter a ballot measure. Despite that challenge, she's looking at the brighter side.

organize such a coalition and be proud we are part of it. Let us hope we do not have to do so, but please be prepared to stand up for equal rights for all."

In a later phone interview with *Just Out*, Eighmey said he's exploring the idea of starting an "educational organization," perhaps utilizing a speakers' bureau, to handle the volatile issue of gay and lesbian rights.

Of BRO's Harris, he says: "Jean has done a superb job fund raising and getting employers to sign onto their Fair Workplace Project, but when it comes to being a spokesperson, there may be other people better suited to do that type of work."