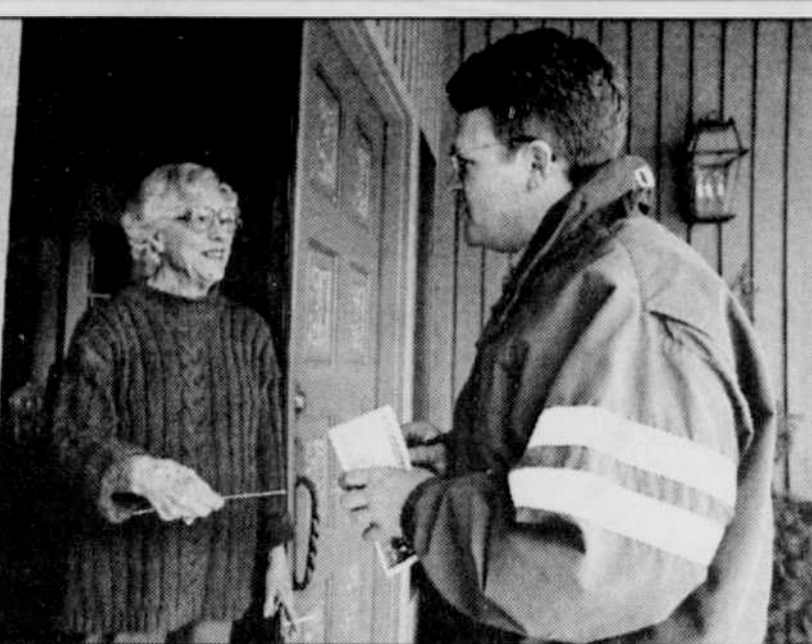


Senate Minority Leader Kate Brown



Left: Gail Shibley circa April 1996; above: Chuck Carpenter on the campaign trail in 1998



George Eighmey in May 1998

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

These days, things are pretty straight in Salem, but life goes on for queer lawmakers of yesteryear by Pat Young

During the early 1990s, Oregon led the nation in terms of out gay, lesbian and bisexual state legislators. We had enough for our own caucus; heck, we even had an openly gay Republican!

Things are different these days, however, as we approach the new millennium. During this 1999 session, there is just one lawmaker who has publicly identified as a member of the sexual minorities community: Senate Minority Leader Kate Brown, a Democrat from Portland, has described herself as bisexual.

"It's quite lonely down here in Salem," notes

Brown, when asked about legislative life without former state Reps. Gail Shibley and George Eighmey, both Portland Democrats; Rep. Chuck Carpenter, a Republican from the Portland area; Rep. Hedy Rijken, a Newport Democrat; and Rep. Cynthia Wooten, a Democrat from Eugene.

So, where are they now? *Just Out* is still trying to track down Rijken and Wooten, but here's the scoop on the others.

When Gail Shibley was appointed to the Oregon Legislature in 1991, she became the state's first openly gay representative. She

was re-elected twice before making a failed bid for a Portland City Council seat.

Last summer, she headed to Washington, D.C., where she now serves as the public affairs director for the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration.

Oregon is very much her home, however, and she considers her tour of duty in D.C. temporary. Still, she says it's a duty that's brought her tremendous enjoyment.

The FHWA makes sure the bridges and roads get built. You know, all the things that make it easier for us to get around town.

George Eighmey was a state representative from 1993 through 1997. Term limits stopped him from running for the post again, and last year he made an unsuccessful bid for a Multnomah County Commission seat.

Eighmey retired from his law practice and is currently the executive director of Compassion in Dying of Oregon, an organization that deals with issues pertaining to end-of-life care.

Getting back into politics is always an option, but Eighmey says he likes his work and may do it for a few more years. Occasionally he goes to Salem to discuss death with dignity matters with lawmakers.

Eighmey says it's a privilege to work with people facing life-ending decisions.

"It's renewed my faith in people's commitment to help others. And that's what I want to do," he says.

In 1994, Chuck Carpenter made history when he became the first openly gay Republican in the nation to win a state legislative office.

PARTY PAUSE

OK, House Joint Resolution 29 got tabled—essentially meaning the anti-gay bill is kaput—but don't pull out your partyware quite yet.

Seems that Republicans have turned to House Joint Resolution 4, which would put the definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman into the Oregon Constitution.

HJR29 was crafted in response to a December ruling in *Tanner vs. Oregon Health Sciences University* that stipulated state and local governments must offer domestic partner benefits to same-sex couples, and that gay men and lesbians are protected from employment discrimination.

HJR29 would have both defined marriage as the union between a man and a woman and invalidated *Tanner*. The more streamlined HJR4 specifically targets same-sex marriage.

"It's basically a clean [Defense of Marriage Act] bill," explains Jean Harris, executive director of Basic Rights Oregon, the gay rights group that is lobbying lawmakers. "On the one hand, I'm glad Republicans killed their own bill [HJR29], but at the same time, they seem committed to passing some piece of anti-gay legislation before they leave."

Like HJR29, HJR4—if approved by the Legislature—would go to voters. The measure was passed June 16 by the House Judiciary Committee on Civil Law.

To learn how you can help, call Basic Rights Oregon at (503) 222-6151.

Reported by INGA SORENSEN



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