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## NORTHWESTnews

### WILL YOU REGISTER WITH ME?

*Continued from the cover*

In Ashland, if couples decide to file their registration with the city, the information becomes public record and may be made available for others to see. If they opt against filing the registration, no public record of the domestic partnership will exist. In either case, couples are given a signed and notarized Certificate of Domestic Partnership.

According to Ann Seltzer, a spokeswoman for the city of Ashland, as of Jan. 19, 16 lesbian and gay couples had registered; six of the couples elected to not be recorded in the city's database, though they still received registry certificates.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, a national gay rights group, 45 municipalities and states have established domestic partnership registries.

Iowa City, Iowa, and Chapel Hill, N.C., are among the cities that have done so, and Seattle launched its registry in 1994.

None exist within the Portland metropolitan area, though there is ongoing discussion about the possibility of implementing such a plan via the city of Portland, Multnomah County or both.

The Focus Group on Family Rights, a project of Love Makes a Family, met Jan. 18 and in part pondered the idea of pursuing domestic partnership registration within the city of Portland. Ten people attended the gathering.

"There's some steam behind this," noted former state Rep. George Eighmey, the focus group's chairman.

But some critics maintain that domestic partnership registries are empty gestures—pure symbolism with no legal teeth—and a way for the government to take gay people's money and in return give them an essentially meaningless piece of paper.

"A stamped seal of nothing!" assessed one focus group attendee.

Still, while domestic partnership registries often lack legal authority, proponents maintain they're a move toward public acknowledgment and increasing acceptability of gay and lesbian couples.

Said Eighmey: "This is not the end-all. We intend to proceed to getting full benefits and rights" afforded to married heterosexual couples.

Eighmey distributed an informal "domestic partnership registry program proposal" that is designed to get folks thinking about the concept.

It asks, among other points, whether people feel a registry should be open exclusively to same-sex couples, as well as "to all citizens of the world, Oregonians only or U.S. citizens only?" Should it be limited to people 18 and older or 21 and older? How should concerns about confidentiality be addressed, if at all? How about a dissolution process for couples who may someday want to deregister their partnership?

Both city of Portland and Multnomah County officials are exploring the registry concept, which could become a reality in the not-too-distant future.

"We're looking into this, though it's still in the initial stages," says Multnomah County Commissioner Lisa Naito, who adds, "I do believe if we had a well-thought-out proposal, we'd have the votes to pass it."

Maura Roche of Basic Rights Oregon, a statewide group that advocates for gay and lesbian rights, says BRO "has been looking at and discussing this and other issues.... We have made ourselves available to the mayor's office."

If Portland and/or Multnomah County moves ahead with a registry, it remains to be seen if there will any conservative backlash.

In Ashland, some opponents did speak out against the registry during debate prior to the City Council's vote.

Since then, however, things have seemed quiet.

"People have been very appreciative of the program," Seltzer says.

■ *How do you feel about a domestic partnership registry? Would you and your partner sign up? Should it be open to heterosexual couples who choose not to marry? Is it a waste of time and money? Is it a building block toward full equality? Submit a letter to the editor at [www.justout.com](http://www.justout.com); mail it to [justout@justout.com](mailto:justout@justout.com) or P.O. Box 14400, Portland, OR 97293-0400. Just Out's fax number is (503) 236-1257.*

*For questions or comments about Just Out's Northwest, national or world news coverage, please send an e-mail to News Editor INGA SORENSEN at [inga@justout.com](mailto:inga@justout.com).*

#### DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP REGISTRY PROGRAM PROPOSAL

The following are proposals for enacting a domestic partnership registry program in Multnomah County. We would like your ideas on the proposal.

1. SHOULD REGISTRATION BE AT MULTNOMAH COUNTY IN MARRIAGE LICENSING DEPARTMENT WHICH MAY BE RENAMED THE FAMILY DEPARTMENT WITH TWO SUBDEPARTMENTS - MARRIAGE AND DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIPS OR SOMETHING SIMILAR OR ELSEWHERE?
2. SHOULD THE REGISTRY BE OPEN TO BOTH GAY AND NON-GAY OR JUST GAY COUPLES?
3. SHOULD IT BE OPEN TO ALL CITIZENS OF THE WORLD, OREGONIANS ONLY OR US CITIZENS ONLY?
4. SHOULD IT BE LIMITED TO PERSONS 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER OR 21 YEARS OLD AND OLDER?
5. SHOULD IT BE ENACTED BY ORDINANCE - BOTH COUNTY AND CITY LEVEL IF NECESSARY OR JUST IN COUNTY OR JUST IN CITY?
6. SHOULD THERE BE THE OPTION TO RECEIVE REGISTRY DOCUMENT WITH OFFICIAL STAMP WITHOUT RECORDING ANYTHING WITH COUNTY OR RECORDING EVERYTHING OR SOMETHING IN BETWEEN? THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE REGISTRANTS IS A CONCERN.
7. AT TIME OF REGISTERING SHOULD THE PARTIES RECEIVE INFORMATION CAUTIONING REGISTRANTS ABOUT POTENTIAL LEGAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS OF REGISTERING? OREGON GAY AND LESBIAN LAW ASSOCIATION COULD PREPARE DOCUMENTS TO BE HANDED OUT TO EACH REGISTRANT. IF THE DOCUMENTS ARE PREPARED SHOULD THE REGISTRANTS BE REQUIRED TO READ THE ONE OR TWO PAGE COVER SHEET SUMMARIZING EFFECT OF REGISTERING. RECORDS ARE SUBJECT TO PUBLIC RECORDS LAW, THUS MAKING THEM AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION.
8. DETAILS OF DISSOLUTION PROCESS WILL BE WORKED OUT LATER, BUT WILL INCLUDE OPTION THAT EITHER PERSON MAY TAKE ACTION TO DE-REGISTER THE PARTNERSHIP.

An unofficial registry proposal and tool to generate community feedback