

# DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN

**The Oregon Citizens Alliance has been a thorn in our side since 1987** by Pat Young

**T**he Oregon Citizens Alliance is back with another Ballot Measure 9. Sound familiar?

History reveals the state's anti-gay saga began with a seemingly harmless primary race. In 1986, the Republican campaign for U.S. Senate pitted incumbent Bob Packwood against Joe Lutz.

At the time, Packwood was respected and popular. It seemed almost foolish for anyone to challenge him, especially during the primary, but Lutz did.

The Baptist minister thought churches should be politically active. Most people, especially Packwood, didn't pay much attention to Lutz.

After all, who was this dark-horse candidate who dared to encroach on Packwood's territory? In the end, Lutz only captured 40 percent of the vote, but his campaign inspired the religious right to become active in politics.

After the election, he and several of his followers saw a niche for conservative views but no local or statewide organization to voice them. So, they formed the OCA in 1987 and tapped Lon Mabon as their leader.

In 1988, the group backed at least 10 legislative candidates and three initiatives. The state quickly learned the OCA was not to be taken lightly.

Measure 8 sought to repeal Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's executive order banning discrimination by state agencies against homosexuals—a milestone in Oregon's history of gay rights. Attempts to add sexual orientation to Oregon's anti-discrimination law had failed in the state Legislature since the first gay rights bill was introduced in 1973.

When the 1987 Legislature still refused to pass a gay rights bill, Goldschmidt took another route and issued an executive order. Gay rights activists were thrilled, but religious conservatives were angry and wanted to undo the executive order as quickly as possible.

By now, OCA co-founder T.J. Bailey was chair of the state Republican Party. He thought only the Legislature or voters should decide issues relating to homosexuality.

Still, it would've been a bit risky for the Republican Party to sponsor an initiative to repeal the executive order, because such an effort might deepen the rift between moderates and conservatives. Instead, Mabon and the OCA took up the task, and Measure 8 passed.

On the positive side, the gay community was forced to come of age politically in terms of fund raising and organizing a statewide campaign. But it was a hard lesson to learn.

1992's Measure 9 went even further. It sought to amend the state's constitution to group homosexuality with pedophilia, sadism and masochism as being abnormal and perverse behavior.

Further, it would forbid local government



Haul those old lawn signs out of the garage to fight the latest Measure 9

from promoting or encouraging such abnormal behaviors and would require schools to set a standard that homosexuality was abnormal. It was so extreme, the state gained national and international attention with coverage including a *New York Times* article titled "In Oregon, Bigotry Will Be on the Ballot."

Individuals went to extraordinary efforts stop Measure 9, which ultimately was defeated. However, the campaign took a toll on the gay community, which was emotionally, financially and physically drained.

Did it have time to celebrate the victory? Not really.

Within 24 hours, Mabon announced the OCA would retool Measure 9 and put it right back before voters in 1994. And it did with Measure 13.

To gear up for the campaign, the OCA went around the state passing "Son of 9" initiatives at the city and county levels. The measures stated that sexual orientation could not be added to local anti-discrimination laws.

The No on 9 Campaign disbanded. In its place, Save Our Communities, better known as SOC-PAC, fought the Son of 9 measures.

As soon as Measure 13 qualified for the ballot, SOC-PAC became No on 13. Once again, the OCA wanted to amend the state's constitution to prohibit the extension of minority status to homosexuals and to prohibit schools from representing homosexuality as acceptable.

The No on 13 Campaign faced a difficult challenge. People still were exhausted from 1992, and regaining that sense of urgency proved difficult because Measure 13 lacked the sensational language of Measure 9.

The media still condemned Measure 13—but not with nearly as much zeal as they did with Measure 9—and voters rejected it. After the election, No on 13 grew into Basic Rights Oregon, which now faces the latest Measure 9, the Student Protection Act.

■ PAT YOUNG, a Portland-based free-lance writer and gay and lesbian historian, is writing a book about Ballot Measure 9.

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