



JUST SAY NO

7,500 people pack Pioneer Courthouse Square

by Jonathan Kipp • Photos by Marty Davis

An estimated 7,500 people poured into Portland's "living room" Oct. 19 and showed their opposition to the Oregon Citizens Alliance's Measure 9. Politicians, clergy, businesspeople, parents and even children cued up to take their turn at the microphone interrupted only by an occasional chant of "No on 9" by the multigenerational crowd at Pioneer Courthouse Square.

The No on 9 Campaign said the race is a "dead heat." Luring undecided people to vote no is a priority as Election Day looms. In fact, because of the vote-by-mail system, Oregonians are expected to start casting votes as early as Oct. 21.

The initiative seeks to prohibit public schools from promoting, sanctioning or encouraging homosexuality. "Measure 9 is perilous to our schools, to our beloved students and to Oregon," Portland Mayor Vera Katz told the crowd.

Gov. John Kitzhaber said he wanted to make his opposition crystal clear. "As a physician, a governor and as an Oregonian," he said.

Kitzhaber warned the crowd about the dangers of bigotry. "We can't allow an extreme group like the OCA to get a foothold in this state of ours," he said.

Kitzhaber said he is concerned about the elimination of HIV education and the increasing risk of gay youths committing suicide. "What we fail to teach our children can literally kill them," he said.

State Rep. Deborah Kafoury admitted she was angry. "We have better things to do than fight the OCA," she said. "How many times must we tell them no?"

Buckman Elementary School student Bri Jarcho, surrounded by teachers, other students and their parents, addressed the crowd. "I have two moms," she said.

Jarcho said she would be afraid to go to school if Measure 9 passes because her family would be discriminated against. "Then I don't know what I'll do," she said.

Hearing those words tore at the heartstrings of many. One man, a state politician, looked down as the girls spoke, tears flooding his eyes.

Bri's friend and fourth-grade classmate, Morgan Castleton, said, "I can't believe they call it the Student Protection Act."

Cleveland High student Victoria Conrad said she was chased, harassed and even beaten by classmates in an Oregon public school when they learned of her bisexuality. She warned that

some sexual minority students would drop out of school if Measure 9 passes.

"A lot of us are afraid," she said. "I'm afraid. Youth are fearful because we have no control. You do," Conrad said in a plea to the adult voters.

Joe D'Allesandro of the Portland Oregon Visitors Association said he is worried about economic consequences as well. If Measure 9 passes, the state would have a difficult time competing for business, he said, naming other examples of boycotts that followed anti-gay and racially charged controversies across the country.

D'Allesandro said Oregon could be known as a progressive place where people get along or as a place where neighbors discriminate against each other. Measure 9's passage would mar the state's image, he said. "Oregon cannot afford to be put on boycott lists," he warned.

Geri Washington, No on 9 deputy manager, said a message needs to be sent to Lon Mabon, OCA executive director. "If he takes one of us on, he takes all of us on," she said.

At this rally, that simple statement received the loudest and most telling applause. **JN**

To make a donation or volunteer for the NO ON 9 CAMPAIGN, call 503-232-7176 or visit the Internet site www.no9.org.



WELCOME BACK

Gail Shibley says "no" to the OCA—again



Avacationing Gail Shibley, Oregon's first openly gay or lesbian state legislator, spoke out against Measure 9 during the downtown rally.

She said she was volunteering her time to make certain that the progress made during the past eight years under the Clinton administration doesn't take a step back. She was appointed to the Oregon Legislature in 1991 and later was elected to serve two more terms in 1993 and 1995.

Shibley worked to oppose the Oregon Citizens Alliance's previous anti-gay efforts, 1992's Measure 9 and 1994's Measure 13. "We are here to take a stand against Measure 9—again," she said.

Today, Shibley is one of 150 openly gay and lesbian members of the Clinton administration. She said it is the most diverse, most inclusive administration in history.

Shibley initially was appointed to a communications director position in the Transportation Department but more recently took on a senior adviser role in the Labor Department. She also just completed a graduate fellowship at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Shibley's future is uncertain. If Texas Gov. George W. Bush wins the presidential election, she'll be out of a job. Whatever the future, though, she said she'll have her hand in politics—something she's done since fourth grade.

Shibley said there is no question where her heart is: Oregon. She hopes her future will include her native state.

As for a future in politics, Shibley said: "I can't imagine not. I'm just not sure what form it will take." **JN**