

# POSITIVE POLICY

Trans community up for civil rights protection by Jonathan Kipp

Following the lead of 27 other U.S. cities, Portland soon hopes to add new civil rights protection to members of the transgender community. The proposal emerged from a partnership among Mayor Vera Katz's office, Commissioner Dan Saltzman's office, the Metropolitan Human Rights Commission and the Northwest Gender Alliance, a trans advocacy organization.

Now, public input about the draft ordinance is sought for a Dec. 13 hearing on the issue. Comments must be submitted by Nov. 24.

Testimony will be taken by the Metropolitan Human Rights Commission or the mayor's office. The draft can be seen on the mayor's Web page.

"We are not leading the pack here, but we are doing the right thing," said Sam Adams, the mayor's chief of staff.

The original Civil Rights Ordinance was passed in 1991. The policy provides civil rights protection to individuals based on race, religion, color, sex, marital status, familial status, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or source of income.

According to the mayor's office, gender identity was not included in the original document as a protected class for two reasons: The issue was highly controversial, and the trans community did not have a lot of advocacy at the time.

Since then, the Portland trans community has organized and continued to lobby politicians for inclusion in the civil rights code. Adams said the Northwest Gender Alliance has been the leader in bringing the issue back to the table.

Two years ago, the city passed a resolution to protect city employees from discrimination based on gender identity. A change to the city's Civil Rights Ordinance was considered, but legal appeals of the city's resolution that followed put that idea on hold.

A subsequent push for a countywide domestic partnership registry further slowed any changes to the civil rights code, as did the Oregon Citizens Alliance's anti-gay Measure 9. Officials said the timing had to be right to proceed.

"They've shown such incredible patience,"

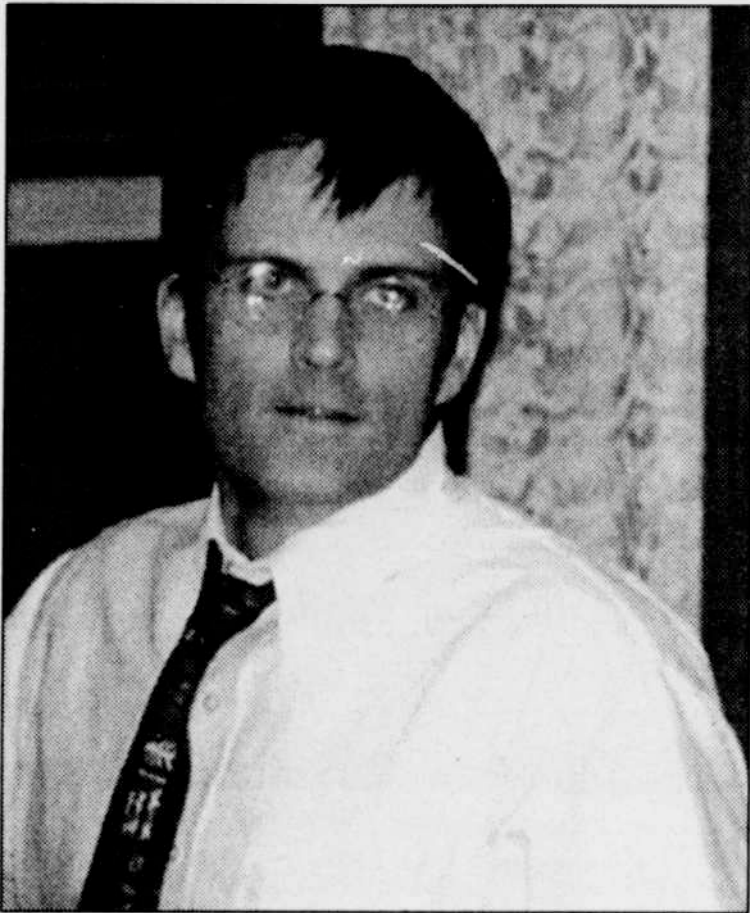


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS  
Sam Adams

Adams said about the trans community. "They are the heroes in this."

Boulder, Colo., and Seattle were used as models for drafting details of the ordinance. Seattle has had a human rights law on the books explicitly including transgendered people since 1986.

Gender identity is defined as "a person's actual or perceived sex, including a person's identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person's sex at birth."

In addition to general civil rights protection, the proposal provides for the tracking of hate crimes against transgendered people, which is not currently part of hate crimes record keeping. jn

To provide testimony contact Amalia Alarcon Gaddie of the Metropolitan Human Rights Commission at [agaddie@ci.portland.or.us](mailto:agaddie@ci.portland.or.us), 503-823-5542 or 1221 S.W. Fourth Avenue, Room 110, Portland, OR 97204; the mayor's office at [www.ci.portland.or.us/mayor/](http://www.ci.portland.or.us/mayor/), 503-823-4122 or 1221 S.W. Fourth Ave., Suite 340, Portland, OR 97204; or attend the City Council meeting 10:30 a.m. Dec. 13 at City Hall.

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