

# 2001: A RACE ODYSSEY

## Candidates vie for county positions

**M**ail-in ballots for the election to fill two positions on the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners must be returned by May 15.

*Just Out* asked the candidates about issues specific to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community. The questions were:

1. What do you see as the most significant role Multnomah County can take in maintaining and continuing civil rights protections for members of the sexual minorities community?
2. What specifically have you done to support civil rights for our readership?
3. What do you see as the major issues facing gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered citizens of Multnomah County?



### MULTNOMAH COUNTY CHAIR

#### JO ANN BOWMAN

1. Multnomah County must set the example in equal opportunity and protection under the law. And the example must start from the top, on the desk of the chair. A person's sexual orientation will have no bearing on their opportunity to work for and advance in Multnomah County offices. Attention must be paid to hate-induced crimes against members of our community.

2. In the state Legislature, I testified and voted against every idiotic, homophobic bill that came across my desk including so-called marriage protection, easing of hate crime penalties and restrictions on adoption based on sexual orientation. In 1993, I co-chaired Stand Up-Portland Diversity Celebration after the No on 9 and No on 13 campaigns. I actively campaign against any Oregon Citizens Alliance-sponsored initiative. We're all affected when civil rights are denied to victims of hate crimes. When homophobic fanatics seek to repress civil rights for some, they're repressing civil rights for everybody.

3. The biggest single issue is equal protection under the law. This is manifested specifically in domestic partnership agreements for county employees. Sexual orientation should have no more bearing on a person's freedom than their race, gender or political affiliation. We all benefit from what Multnomah County offers, regardless of sexual orientation. We must all share the burdens, too.

#### DIANE LINN

1. If elected chair of Multnomah County, I will aggressively pursue (and set the example for other jurisdictions to follow) policies

and laws that will allow gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals to live and work freely without fear of discrimination.

2. As a county commissioner I proudly supported and voted for Multnomah County's domestic partnership registry as well as the county's resolution adopting a strategic plan for increasing supports for sexual minority youth in all parts of Multnomah County. I also supported and voted for a resolution that created a workshop that is charged with creating a countywide ordinance that will eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, familial status and source of income in employment, housing and public accommodations. We are expecting their results in June. I have been honored to stand shoulder to shoulder with leaders and activists in the gay and lesbian community to fight for basic rights for all members of our community. I was actively involved in raising money and actively campaigning to defeat both Measures 9s and Measure 13.

3. There are many issues facing the GLBT

community such as domestic violence services for GLBT individuals, counseling to help GLBT youth as they navigate a very challenging time in their lives, the AIDS crisis, making sure states don't pass marriage laws that restrict marriage to just a man and a woman as a way to prevent same-sex unions and honoring domestic partnerships with the full benefits that married people receive. I believe the major issue facing GLBT citizens surround discrimination relating to sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public education and all other

aspects of life. Despite how far the community has come, 2000 demonstrated that the assault on the rights of the GLBT community—from the U.S. Supreme Court to the Oregon Citizens

Alliance—is not subsiding. I will play a leadership role at every opportunity to advance the basic civil rights of every member of our community, specifically our GLBT members.

### MULTNOMAH COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 1

#### CHARLOTTE COMITO

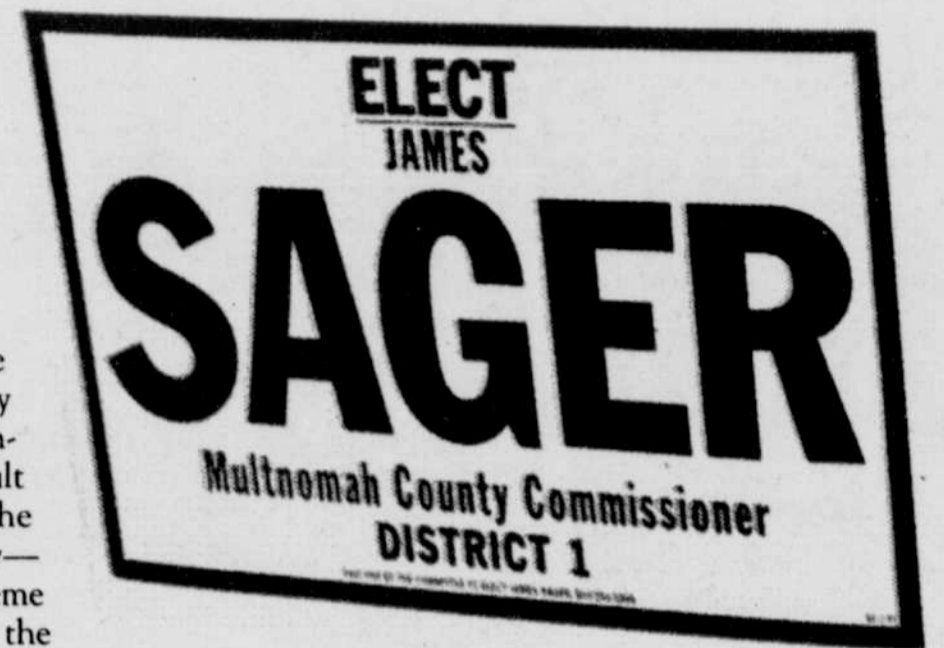
1. We can continue to advocate for civil rights, as we have in the past. We recently passed the domestic partnership registry, which more than 200 couples have participated in. I served on the work group that created the registry. In addition, I serve on the countywide Civil Rights Task Force. The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners created the task force to make recommendations for extending civil rights on the basis of gender identity, sexual orientation and source of income in employment, housing and public accommodations.

2. In addition to the work I have listed above, I served on the Right to Privacy board and political action committee, where I worked to help elect lesbian- and gay-friendly candidates to the state Legislature. We also introduced a statewide omnibus civil rights bill every year. That effort has unfortunately been unsuccessful thus far. I also worked as a fundraiser on the first No on 9 Campaign, which fortunately for everyone in the GLBT community was successfully defeated.

3. In addition to general civil rights issues, including the right to work and live where you want, issues for the GLBT community are the same as for the rest of the community: stable and secure employment, caring for children, affording a home, the environment, caring for aging parents and a sense of feeling safe in our community.

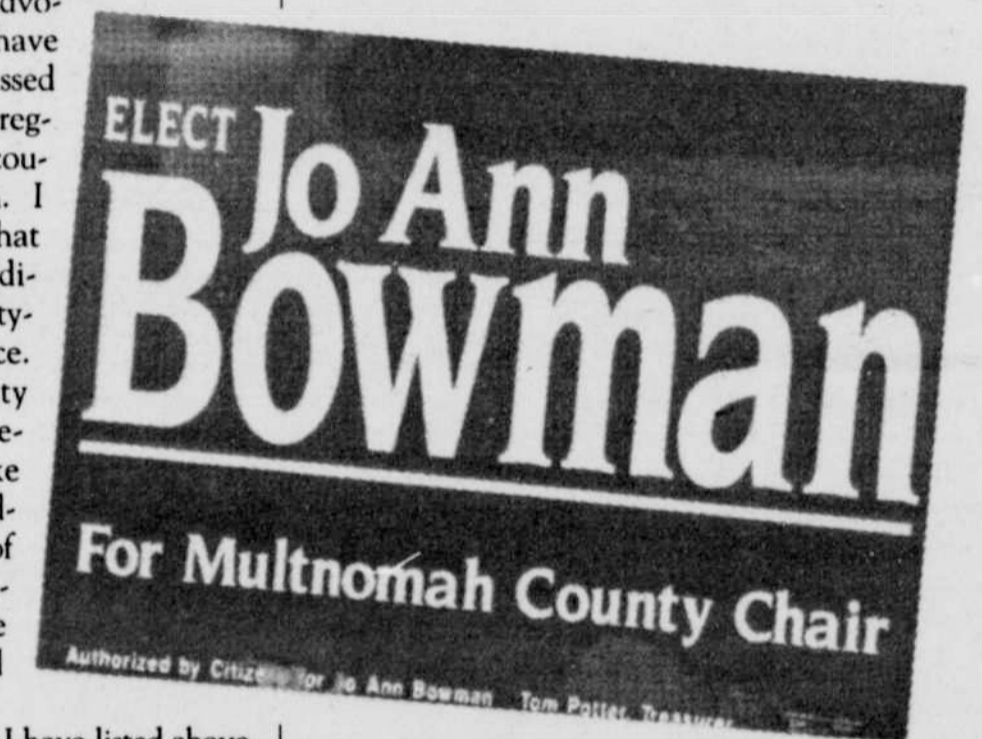
#### JAMES DAVIS

1. An independent citizens review board to investigate complaints of police misconduct.



2. Like most of your readership, I work for equality from conviction, not profession. From my time registering voters in Mississippi and Alabama to now as an advocate for senior citizens and affordable housing, I take my opportunities as they come. When my firm sponsored the Amazon Dragons boat team, it was done because a group of women needed a sponsor and I could help. Not because they were lesbians. Not because other firms didn't want their names on the team shirts. It has been, is and will be a matter of equality with me.

3. Equality. Separate is not equal. Only by united action can these groups achieve that measure of equality that is enjoyed by the straight society.



#### MARIA ROJO DE STEFFEY

1. First: Be an example. Multnomah County should take the lead and serve as an educator in supporting the rights of all people including sexual minorities. Second: Be courageous. Dispelling myths and moving ahead isn't always easy. If there are members of our community who are uncomfortable with the issues involving sexual minorities, we should not ignore them but engage them positively.

2. As a board member of the United Way I found it unconscionable that they continue to fund the Boy Scouts while they pursue an aggressive anti-gay policy. I raised this as a public issue. Unfortunately, the United Way board did not agree, and I resigned in protest. I was, however, able to bring media and public attention to this issue, and other funders responded. Overall, a strong victory for civil rights.

3. Prejudice, discrimination and misinformation, which lead to nonacceptance of sexual minorities as productive members of our society. These realities are not just imbedded in parts of our culture but are being used in a cynical and dangerous way by some political elements to forward their own broader agenda.

#### JAMES SAGER

1. The county, through the commissioners,