

# just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

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**Letters to the editor** should be limited to 500 words. Announcements regarding life transitions (births, deaths, unions, etc.) should be limited to 200 words; photos are welcome. **Deadline for submissions** to the editorial department and for the **Calendar** is the Thursday 15 days before the next publication date. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

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## GUEST COMMENTARY

BY JIM CLAY

# We face a crisis

This is an opportunity to be taken—or lost

**D**uring the next few weeks our community faces an extraordinary crisis—one that will have vast impact on gay, lesbian, bi, trans and questioning youth for years to come. When it's over, we can reflect on whether we rose to the challenge.

I hope we do. The stakes are high.

Please understand how I define a crisis. It's not simply a bad situation, and in fact it might not be bad at all.

It's a *turning point*, for better or worse—a moment to choose a future direction. But let's be clear: *Something* will change for better or for worse, and to a great extent we get to decide.

It could be for the better if we take action now—and it will be for the worse if we do not act at all. Again, it's our choice—yours and mine.

Simply put, Multnomah County is scrambling to make huge midyear budget cuts. Economists project revenues significantly below what had been expected, and enormous cuts are needed now so the government doesn't run out of money before the end of its fiscal year.

Services specifically targeting sexual minority youth are on the chopping block. Last year the county funded several heroic community efforts: social support groups; referrals to medical, social and mental health services; in-school support; and outreach to specific sexual minority communities, including youth of color, homeless youth, East County youth and others.

All of this could be eliminated in the next few weeks. *All of it.*

When I began working for Multnomah County in 1991 in the Youth Program Office, not a penny was spent on services specifically targeting sexual minorities. During my several years as staff assistant for County Chair Beverly Stein, and more recently working for County Chair Diane Linn, supports for sexual minority youth have grown.

More than 10 years later it's still not all that's needed, but social justice takes time. All of this could come to an end, however, reversing a decade of slow yet measured progress—unless we act now.

OK, so now you're asking yourself, "What can I do?" I'm so glad you asked!

The actions we need to take are easy, but we must act quickly. Linn has said, "Our intention throughout this fast and furious process is to be as inclusive as possible—both in terms of people and proposals for reductions."

Here are four ways you and I can help:

**1. Attend public budget hearings.** Multnomah County has a long history of direct democracy. Citizens can speak with the elected leaders who make the difficult decisions.

Go to one, two or all three of the scheduled public hearings. They will take place at 6 p.m. Nov. 6 in the Conference Room at the Gresh-

am Branch Library, 385 N.W. Miller St.; 6:30 p.m. Nov. 8 in the First Floor Commissioners Boardroom at the Multnomah Building, 501 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd.; and 6 p.m. Nov. 19 in the Conference Room at the North Portland Branch Library, 512 N. Killingsworth St.

Don't listen to anyone who says it won't matter—they are wrong big-time! Elected officials stay in office by doing what the public wants, and they know it.

Don't get fancied up. Don't worry about not knowing the political process. Don't let your fear of public speaking stop you.

Just show up and tell the commissioners you want services to sexual minority youth to be protected. This tiny amount of money has taken years to build, and it's too precious to lose.

Bring friends, family and neighbors. When it comes to a crowd at a hearing, size matters!

Come in droves or come in drag. Just be there!

The best testimony is brief testimony. Plan your remarks, rehearse them, and time them.

Four or five well-organized sentences is best. Three minutes is too long.

If you are not going to speak, just being there makes a huge difference. Pack the house!

**2. Send e-mail to the commissioners.** All of

them will appreciate your advice as they face difficult decisions. Be supportive. Keep it *brief* and to the point.

Send e-mail to Linn at [mult.chair@co.multnomah.or.us](mailto:mult.chair@co.multnomah.or.us); Maria Rojo de Steffy at [district1@co.multnomah.or.us](mailto:district1@co.multnomah.or.us); Serena Cruz at [serena@co.multnomah.or.us](mailto:serena@co.multnomah.or.us); Lisa Naito at [lisa.h.naito@co.multnomah.or.us](mailto:lisa.h.naito@co.multnomah.or.us); and Lonnie Roberts at [lonnie.j.roberts@co.multnomah.or.us](mailto:lonnie.j.roberts@co.multnomah.or.us).

**3. Send letters to the commissioners.** Follow the same guidelines as for e-mail, but get them in the mail immediately, because they need some delivery time. Again, the key is to be supportive, *brief* and to the point.

Write to 501 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 600, Portland, OR 97214.

**4. Tell people in your family, school, workplace or neighborhood.** Spread the word. Use technology or the grapevine, but do it now!

Multnomah County is generally supportive of the sexual minorities community, so don't get sidetracked on allegations of homophobia or bias. By and large this is a fiscal crisis, pure and simple, with no easy solutions.

Your involvement in the next couple of weeks will play a large part in how it ends up. Don't wait on the sidelines! **J**

JIM CLAY is a member of the Advocacy Team for Sexual Minority Youth and has worked for Multnomah County for more than 10 years. Contact him with questions about how to engage in the public budget process at [jimarc@qwest.net](mailto:jimarc@qwest.net).

## REFLECTIONS

10 years ago in just out...

VOL. 9 NO. 1, NOVEMBER 1991



• The British Broadcasting Corporation will make history Nov. 16 when BBC-TV-2 turns over the whole evening to gay and lesbian programming.

• Donna Summer is suing *New York* magazine for libel for reporting that she told concertgoers eight years ago that gays are sinners and that AIDS is a divine ruling. The disco diva asserted: "I did not say it. I do not believe it."

• *Just Out* photographer Catherine Stauffer is filing a lawsuit against the Oregon Citizens Alliance, spokesman Scott Lively and the Portland Foursquare Church after an incident in which he allegedly physically assaulted her as she attempted to attend an OCA-sponsored event to which she had received a formal invitation.

• Al Mobley, former Oregon Citizens Alliance vice chairman, has announced his bid for the 5th Congressional District seat held by freshman Democrat Mike Kopetski. The highly conservative candidate is seeking to expand his political base by

emphasizing his ties with the Republican Party. Mobley is the second OCA-affiliated candidate in the past few weeks to announce a bid for public office. Co-founder Joe Lutz previously announced his challenge to unseat Republican U.S. Sen. Bob Packwood.

• Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and gay-supportive heterosexuals crowded Pioneer Courthouse Square on Oct. 11 in celebration of National Coming Out Day. More than 2,500 people attended the rally organized by the No on Hate campaign as part of its ongoing efforts to defeat the anti-gay initiatives being promoted by the Oregon Citizens Alliance.

• The Right to Privacy Political Action Committee is looking for a new name and asking for help from the community. Board chair John Baker said, "As the PAC enters the next decade, it wants to move forward with a name that more closely reflects the group's mission to obtain full civil rights for gay men, lesbians and bisexuals."

• Kate Clinton is celebrating 10 years of performing with a 40-city tour including Portland and Eugene.

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