

Speak Out

just asking How can we, as members of the sexual minorities community, take steps to increase education and awareness among voters and keep the Student Protection Act II from even qualifying for the Oregon ballot?

We need to make sure people in smaller towns know Lon Mabon went to jail for contempt of court. This will discredit his organization.

The *Oregonian* had a nice editorial. Newspapers in smaller communities might not have given this incarceration much attention. Maybe letters could be sent, or editors could be asked to carry stories about Mabon's contempt hearing, with follow-ups on subsequent developments.

Also, get the text of the proposed initiative, start pointing out errors of fact and logic, and emphasize the underlying intent and actual consequences if it is adopted.

BURLEIGH BOOKER
Portland



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

throw stones! Try a little kindness and understanding to your trans brothers and sisters.

DEANNA LYNNMARIE BRYANT
Portland

Nothing special

TO THE EDITOR:

I am amazed that the cause of partnership rights hasn't become a higher priority for our community—because if anything is a matter of basic fairness, it is this issue.

A total of 700 statutes and 350 administrative rules define the rights and responsibilities of marriage in the state of Oregon alone. These laws apply automatically to heterosexuals simply because they choose to marry. Add to that the federal laws and statutes, and it is clear gay men and lesbians are getting screwed (and it ain't fun).

These laws apply to every facet of life—for instance, the right to make medical decisions on your partner's behalf, to visit a partner in the hospital or other public institution, to choose a final resting place for a deceased partner, to file a joint tax return (and not have to pay two fees to the accountant), to inherit in the absence of a will, to obtain government benefits such as Social Security and Medicare or to obtain bereavement leave or sick leave to care for a partner or child. The list goes on and on.

Historically, marriage was a union in which wives were the property of their husbands. Marriage also traditionally has been defined as a union only between people of the same race or religion.

In fact, as recently as 1958, a black woman and a white man were arrested in Virginia for marrying. A court upheld their conviction by relying on attitudes about unnatural relationships that sound as if they are straight out of today's headlines.

This case, *Loving vs. Virginia*, ultimately went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which in 1967 overturned these heinous laws. Today, same-sex couples are the only ones denied the freedom to marry, and the arguments used against same-sex marriage are the same ones that were used against interracial marriage just 30 years ago.

next issue Up-and-coming gay icon Britney Spears: the next Madonna or the next Tiffany? Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

I often am asked whether my partner, Marc, and I would get married, and my attitude has changed through the years. At first, I didn't want to emulate a societal norm that I thought had little relevance. But as our relationship endured, I became more and more aware of how much extra effort we have to put into our affairs (and how much more money we need to spend on these efforts) just to protect ourselves.

And our families are supportive of our relationship. Imagine the difficulties if they weren't.

It is time we demand fairness and parity. When our enemies say we want special rights, what they really are admitting is we want the same rights that are accorded them. Not special rights, just equal rights.

FLOYD SKLAVER
Portland

Act locally

TO THE EDITOR:

I oppose the proposal to contract out Portland Public Schools custodian jobs to a private company. Our public employees not only care about our children but keep them in a safe, clean and healthy learning environment.

Contracting out to save money for the district would be "penny-wise and pound-foolish." A "cost-saving" private company would mean drastically lowered wages and benefits as well as the resulting low morale, high absenteeism and rapid turnover of employees.

Short-term, disgruntled workers would not be invested in the schools or the students. Our children and their teachers should not be subjected to unsafe, unclean and unhealthy learning environments.

At this critical time of economic downturn, our community needs more living-wage, union-protected jobs—not fewer. Families need breadwinners with job security. Neighborhoods need stable families. Businesses need consumers with confidence and money to spend. The members of Service Employees International Union Local 140 deserve our support.

JAMIE PARTRIDGE
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