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Speak out

Punching Judy

TO THE EDITOR:

I want to thank Marty Davis for her Oct. 4 commentary, "Truth in Advertising." It was thought-provoking and right on the mark.

As the GLBT civil rights movement progresses in Oregon, we must start thinking in an offensive and strategic mode. We have for far too long been defensive in our thinking and rhetoric—mainly, I believe, because we have been under constant attack.

Many think the next step in achieving our rights is to have a statewide employment nondiscrimination law. This process will be hard-fought, and we will need many allies—Democrats, Republicans, Independents, liberals, moderates and conservatives—to achieve this goal.

It will be very hard to find members of the state Legislature who agree to join a coalition, or to vote an employment nondiscrimination bill into law, if they might come under attack because of not being progressive to the point of agreeing on partnership, marriage rights or other desired rights or have taken stances against us in the past but are changing their minds. Let's not kid ourselves: We have achieved a lot, but we still have a long way to go.

If we want to progress, it will be important to accept and even praise the movement of people who once disagreed with us and who now believe we have been wronged by society. For it will be many of these people who will help us attain our goals.

Yes, we might doubt their sincerity, but the truth will lie in their voting record. Sen. Gordon Smith has made such movement; by being a lead sponsor on hate crimes legislation he has alienated members of his party and members of his faith and alienated the conservative right wing, including receiving diatribes from Lon Mabon.

He also has co-sponsored a national bill called the Employment Nondiscrimination Act and helped get Jim Hormel appointed to be the first openly gay ambassador. At some point we must believe he is helping us.

So why are we attacking him? Vote for Bradbury, but don't bite the hand that is helping us.

And why are we attacking Judy Shepard? What has she done wrong?

One of the most unfortunate aspects of this senatorial race is that we gay men and lesbians have verbally and in writing attacked Judy. I have seen an extremist e-mail sent by an Oregonian to her, comparing her endorsement as equal to endorsing Adolf Hitler.

When did we become that thing we are fighting to end? It's time we cool down the rhetoric and keep our eyes on the prize of our civil rights.

RON GLANVILLE
Portland

Support Smith

TO THE EDITOR:

Re-election of Gordon Smith is in the strategic interests of the cause of equality for gay men and lesbians in the United States.

He has taken a courageous stand, in public, for protection of gay men and lesbians from discrimination in employment and housing since before his election in 1996. He also has taken repeated public stands—courageous and principled stands—for a hate crimes bill that protects gay men and lesbians.

In a political model where there are two dominant and virtually equal political parties, we lose if we fail to have the kind of representation that only Smith can give us in the Republican Party. Electing a Democrat to the Senate automatically deprives us of representa-

tion on these vital issues in the Senate Republican Caucus.

Smith is one of the appallingly few politicians I know of who is genuinely compassionate and caring about controlling discrimination against gay men and lesbians. As the organizer and former president of the now-defunct Log Cabin Republicans of Oregon, I join with the Human Rights Campaign in supporting him for re-election for these reasons and a second but even more important reason.

The basic fact is that Oregon's gay and lesbian population needs to have a compassionate and principled friend inside the Republican Caucus in Congress! The basic fact is that Smith is the go-to person for Republicans in Congress who are disposed toward fairness for gay men and lesbians.

In addition, we need to have him inside President Bush's group of legislative advisers. No Democrat—none—can do what he can for us in Washington, D.C., or Oregon for that matter.

Smith's current television ad campaign is the first example of any politician ever being as open in support for compassion toward gay men and lesbians. He is to be congratulated by all of us nationwide—not just in Oregon—for his courage, compassion and commitment. Gordon Smith is a politician we can trust on the important issues of discrimination and hate crimes.

LEE COLEMAN
Aloha

Don't be misled

TO THE EDITOR:

I'd like to think Judy Shepard was just gullible because of the positive things said about Gordon Smith by, among others, some members of the GLBT community and the Human Rights Campaign. I don't really much care what HRC says and does with its awards and honors; that's up to them.

But as for Smith being supportive of the GLBT community, I think we're being misled. His personal religious beliefs are stronger than any allegiance to our community.

A larger factor than our community's concerns in the upcoming election, though, is the overall state of our nation under a Bush/Republican administration, Congress and Senate. By presidential order, many civil rights already have been summarily abridged in the name of the "war on terrorism."

If we look, speak, think or act differently from the majority, we are subject to arrest and secret trial by a military tribunal, with no legal counsel or constitutional protections. If we disagree with the president and speak out in any public way, we can be pegged as traitors, with the same military tribunal determining our guilt or innocence.

Does this sound anything like the prelude to World War II and the Nazi regime? Remember the words of pastor Reinhold Niebuhr that end with "when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me." He died in a concentration camp.

Women's right to reproductive choices, U.S. Supreme Court and federal court bench vacancies, Oregon's death with dignity legislation, the environment, conservation and a whole host of economic issues are all subject to Bush's administrative fiat. His decisions will have long-lasting negative effects on us all.

We need to have the Senate be a brake on Bush's overreaching and overreaction. The Senate's abilities to confirm appointments and to block legislation originating in the House are powerful tools that should not be in the hands of Republicans.

To have a president and both the House and Senate in the hands of one party makes for a dangerous combination. We need to be sure

there are some brakes that can be applied when necessary.

At the very least, we have to maintain a majority of non-Republicans in the Senate. As of today, the Senate has a non-Republican majority of just one seat.

Sen. Robert Torricelli, D-N.J., will forfeit his seat at the end of this term and is not running for re-election. That will leave his seat vulnerable.

Smith is a Republican who is obviously well thought of by the party, because the president has made campaign stops here and probably will make more in the future. When the Republican Party Senate whip says "jump," Smith will ask, "How high?" and do whatever he's told.

Remember to vote your conscience, not just party affiliation, especially this time around. A lot depends on each one of our votes.

CHRISTOPHER J. ARMSTRONG-STEVENSON
St. Helens

Elect the right president

TO THE EDITOR:

What would you say if a candidate for dog catcher made it a point to talk about how she was anti-equal rights, anti-woman and anti-choice? If you're like us, you might ask yourself, "What do your opinions about reproductive rights and sexuality have to do with being dog catcher?"

For years, the extreme religious right wing has used low-profile offices and small elections as a training ground for their political leadership, and they're trying to do it again. Sexual minorities and women in our region are under attack from an unlikely place: the race for Metro Council president.

Few people know that Metro is the only directly elected regional government in the country. Even fewer know that it runs our zoo, convention center, parks and recycling programs. Perhaps most important to our quality of life, the Metro Council decides where and when to expand our urban growth boundary, where to build new trains and roads, and how to preserve the livability of our region for all its citizens.

This year, for the first time, citizens will be able to elect a president for the Metro Council. This race is the second-largest in the state—only the governor is directly elected by more Oregonians than the Portland region's president.

David Bragdon, a Metro councilor with a proven track record, is a candidate for the position. You might have met him at the Basic Rights Oregon dinner this year. He's a nice guy, he's smart, and he has a great track record.

Although Metro does not deal directly with issues involving reproductive rights and sexual minorities, David has been a staunch supporter of giving equal benefits to domestic partners of Metro employees. He also has overseen the acquisition of hundreds of acres of greenspace for our region's residents and has worked hard to provide choices in housing, transportation and jobs for all of us.

David has proven he can protect farmland and open space and preserve what is so special about our region. As Metro Council president, he will continue his legacy of preserving the region's livability for all of its residents, including sexual minorities.

David's opponent, however, is a far-right religious candidate who has publicly taken extreme anti-woman, anti-choice and anti-equality stances. She was Bill Sizemore's press secretary.

She was funded and supported by the extremist, far-right group Oregonians in Action. She has earned the endorsement of land speculators, special interests and the Oregon Family Council for being pro-sprawl and against envi-