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Speak out

Driven up the wall

TO THE EDITOR:

Your recent article on Outside In's ID Project testifies to Portland's advancement in social awareness vis-à-vis trans issues ["Identity Crisis," Dec. 6]. Yet, as a person formerly identified as transsexual and once on the transitioning track these kids now are on, I feel the ID Project is still a compromise plan, however well intended it might be.

Although Oregon sets itself apart from many other states on this issue, the current Department of Transportation administrative rules regarding the "sex markers" in its identification documents are grossly inadequate. In order for one to obtain an authorization to change a sex marker on a driver's license, he first must accept a dehumanizing label of "gender identity disorder" upon himself. Once a person embarks on the transition process, she is encouraged to learn in a very stereotypical manner how a woman (or a man) is supposed to act and is made dependent on hormone medications produced by pharmaceutical giants.

The medical institution and the state of Oregon are interested only in maintaining the strict boundary of separation between "M" and "F," or no one would need permission from a therapist and the government to change his or her gender. It should be as easy as changing one's address, weight or height.

Have you seen a scale at any Department of Motor Vehicles office so you can prove how much you weigh, or has anyone asked you to provide a letter from your doctor stating how tall you are? Then why are people who change genders seen with such a deep suspicion that they must prove their innocence by showing a letter from a therapist?

Furthermore, I believe some transgender people even lie to their therapists and call themselves transsexuals just for the benefit of having their driver's licenses changed and undergo surgery for the similar legal and societal benefits. This will be unnecessary if sex markers categorically are eliminated from all public documents.

The existence of the list of "approved" therapists is a problem, not a solution. First, the list creates an unlawful cartel among mental health professionals, allowing a very small number of them to gain an unfair competitive edge over other equally licensed therapists—a possible violation of anti-trust laws. Second, this list will create two classes of people among transsexuals—one who can afford \$100 an hour and those who cannot—and the state of Oregon will provide a "right" ID to the economically advantaged former so they won't risk more discrimination, but not to the underprivileged latter. This

goes counter to the constitutional doctrine of equal protection.

Furthermore, neither the ODOT regulation nor the ID Project truly addresses the rights of those who are outside the male-female bigender construct. Nothing short of abolishing all references to sex in all identity papers would be an adequate solution. The ID Project is one small step toward the right direction, but it's not an answer.

SARAH-ANDREA (SAM) MORRIGAN
International Association for Multigender
Minority Empowerment Coordinator

Where there's smoke...

TO THE EDITOR:

Can someone explain it to me? Can someone send me an e-mail, a letter, a card?

With all the evidence of its link to cancer, impotence and shorter life spans, why do gay men do it more often than any other group? With the gay community's political enemies being funded by companies who provide our ability to access it, why aren't we stopping?

I mean, come on! The gay community practically created the health movement of the '90s.

Bally Total Fitness and 24 Hour Fitness can bank on our monthly contributions more easily than the televangelists can with the poor widowed ladies. Bars are out; weight rooms and treadmills are in.

Yet, after an hour or two of working out to stay healthy, gay men light up. No, they don't get happy; they start to smoke.

At the Gay Games in Sydney, Australia, I was amazed at the men who finished a race, grabbed their towel and went outside for a smoke. The streets, the bars, wherever there were men, the faggots followed.

Our community obsesses with looking good and performing well. I would think smoking would be the last thing any of us would want to do.

Smoking causes death and disease. Sure, I guess we don't have to worry about impotence—heck, we have the little blue pill readily available. And since many men take pills while they are at clubs dancing, why not take one more for sex?

If our community stopped smoking, think of the money we'd save, the things we could do! We wouldn't have to take our bar wear to the cleaners every Monday morning reeking of smoke. We could reduce the amount of Oil of Olay we smear on our faces at night due to the nicotine-related age lines. More of us could work out an extra hour or not become so bitchy on those long plane rides. And we even could

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