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NORTHWEST newsbriefs

BILLS INTRODUCED

Two pro-gay measures have been introduced in the Oregon Legislature.

Senate Bill 786 bans discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodation, public assistance and education. Basic Rights Oregon says the measure has large-scale, bipartisan sponsorship.

Senate Bill 816 would add gender identity to the state's bias crime laws, which currently include sexual orientation. BRO also is introducing this act in the House as a Judiciary Committee measure. The House version will have as its requesters Washington County District Attorney Robert Herman, who was responsible for classifying the 2001 murder of trans woman Loni Okaruru as a hate crime, as well as Detective Michael O'Connell, who was a chief investigator on the case.

"We embark upon this legislative journey knowing it'll be an uphill battle to pass each bill," said Roey Thorpe, BRO executive director. "Nondiscrimination legislation has been sponsored nearly every session since the 1970s, but this is the first year it will include gender identity as well as sexual orientation. Success this session will be measured in part by how many folks we can inform about the real lives of sexual and gender minorities."

BRO hopes 150 or more people from around the state will participate in Oregonians for Equality Lobby Day from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. March 26. Queers and allies will attend an early morning training in Salem, receive materials, visit legislative offices, eat lunch and report on their success during an afternoon wrap-up session.

Organizers promise to make this day accessible to folks statewide, organizing carpools and renting vans if necessary. "Don't worry if you've never lobbied before—we'll help you learn everything you need to know and we will even make it fun!" field director Jessica DuBois said.

To register call 503-222-6151 or e-mail jessica@basicrights.org.

**BURNSIDE TRIANGLE
FINDINGS PRESENTED**

The Burnside Triangle Advisory Group presented to the Portland City Council the findings of a volunteer-organized survey designed to identify community priorities for future redevelopment of the historic neighborhood March 19. Commissioners unanimously approved its recommendations to help guide the implementation of the West End Plan, which will have a significant impact on the area.

The purpose of the survey was to give queer

citizens the opportunity to voice their opinions on the triangle's future. More than 500 people completed questionnaires asking whether they support identifying the area as a gay, lesbian, bi and trans historical or business district as well as what physical improvements they'd like to see. The advisory group developed these recommendations in response to an earlier survey conducted by the Metropolitan Human Rights Center in the summer of 2001.

Among numerous findings, the preliminary results indicate strong support for publicly recognizing and commemorating the triangle as a historical district. This might be fulfilled through the funding and placement of markers recognizing significant sites. The public commemoration would affirm the struggle of the sexual minorities community to achieve social equality in Portland and honor the contributions that queer citizens have made to the city.

Other findings suggest strong interest in the development of a queer community center in the area. Residents, businesses and visitors want to retain the neighborhood's unique characteristics and support the retention of existing and locally owned businesses and an awareness of the need for social service supports for homeless and low-income individuals. The survey indicates broad support for a wide variety of streetscape improvements such as trees, furniture and queer-identified banners.

The final report and recommendations of the group are available at www.snabulus.com/btag.

INVESTIGATION ENDS

Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker announced March 6 the results of a nine-month internal inquiry into an assault on a man at a downtown nightclub by two off-duty cops.

The investigation focused on why command staff dragged their feet in looking into the Jan. 24, 2002, incident outside Stephano's. An anonymous letter to the Independent Police Review Division prompted the criminal inquiry, which was not made public until April 1, 2002.

"Based on the findings of the investigation, I have made the difficult decision to propose discipline for a total of seven members of the Portland Police Bureau including: one commander, two lieutenants, three sergeants and one officer," Kroeker said. "The proposed discipline ranges from demotions and suspensions to letters of reprimand.... Contractual obligations prohibit me from identifying the specific officers or discipline at this time."

The incident initially was thought to be a hate crime because a witness heard a gay-related epithet during the altercation with the heterosexual victim. Officers Grant Bailey and Craig



From left, Jacob Brostoff and Melinda Marie Jetté listen to Mike Piña discuss the Burnside Triangle Advisory Group's survey findings March 19 at Portland City Hall

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