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## NORTHWEST newsbriefs

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real or perceived sexual orientation, gender and disability to national hate crime laws and give feds greater leverage in providing assistance with investigation and prosecution.

"A government's first duty is to protect and defend its citizens. Our laws should do that by reflecting our highest values," Smith said in a statement. "Over the past several years, Americans have been listening with their hearts, not just their ears, and they are ready for a hate crimes bill. I am confident that Congress will pass legislation this year so that the potential victims of hate crimes know that the federal government is on their side."

The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act has strong bipartisan support in the Senate with 49 co-sponsors and is endorsed by more than 175 law enforcement, civil rights, civic and religious organizations, including the National Sheriffs' Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police, U.S. Conference of Mayors and Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association.

"This bill sends a clear message that violence of any kind is unacceptable. The Local Law Enforcement Act is now a symbol that can become substance," Smith said. "The law is a teacher, and we should teach our fellow citizens that all crime is hateful. But we can also teach that some crime is so odious that an extra measure of protection is demanded by us, so that it will never again be repeated among us. By changing this law, we can change hearts and minds as well."

The act already has passed the Senate in earlier forms on two different occasions—most recently in June 2000 as an amendment to the Defense Department authorization bill, by a vote of 57-42, with 13 Republicans. In September 2000, the House also passed a motion to instruct in support of the measure, 232-192, with 41 Republicans.

The Senate previously passed the legislation in July 1999 as an amendment to the Commerce, Justice, State appropriations bill. Each time the amendment was stripped out in conference committee.

### LUNCH SUPPORTS FAIR WORKPLACES

More than 400 people attended the 10th Annual Oregonians Against Discrimination Luncheon on April 22 at the Hilton Hotel.

The event netted nearly \$55,000 for Basic Rights Oregon's Fair Workplace Project, which holds forums for human resources professionals, provides information and training to expand nondiscrimination policies that include gender identity and educates workplaces on the advantages of providing domestic partnership benefits. This year's Fair Workplace Award went to Work-systems Inc. and Nerissa Ediza, the team behind *Working It Out: Employed & Empowered*, a video aimed at human resources professionals considering hiring queer youth.

Roey Thorpe, BRO executive director, urged the audience to fight discrimination by talking honestly with others about equality. She added that this applies to all people whether they are gay, lesbian, bi, trans or straight.

"Nothing is as powerful as speaking about our lives and our hearts," Thorpe said. "Nothing makes the 'family values' people look silly as well as talking about our families and our values.... I want to ask every person in this room for a pledge: to not shy away from the reality of our lives, to not gloss over certain facts about the people we love and to speak the truth to your co-workers, friends and family every day this year."

BRO already has set the date for its next big event. The gay rights group's annual dinner will be held Oct. 10 at the Oregon Convention Center.

### PUT YOURSELF TO THE TEST

The Fair Housing Council of Oregon needs help in its fight against discrimination. The nonprofit organization takes complaints from people who believe they have been illegally mistreated because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, mental or physical disability, having children, source of income, marital status or age.

The council tests for illegal housing discrimination by sending out pairs of volunteers to potentially biased landlords. For example, if a lesbian is concerned that she is being denied housing based on her sexual orientation, two people would visit the site with identical qualifications, except one would be straight. An enforcement coordinator then would review their reports to determine whether they were treated differently.

The council is seeking testers from all backgrounds to attend its next training May 8. People are needed from throughout Oregon and Clark County, Wash.

For more information contact Moloy Good at 503-402-1157, 888-772-1072 or [mkgood@fhco.org](mailto:mkgood@fhco.org).

### CRYING FOWL

The Barnyard Ruckus for Justice, an action by and for progressive rural Oregonians, will be held from 1 to 5 p.m. May 16 at the Oregon State Capitol in Salem.

The Rural Organizing Project event will



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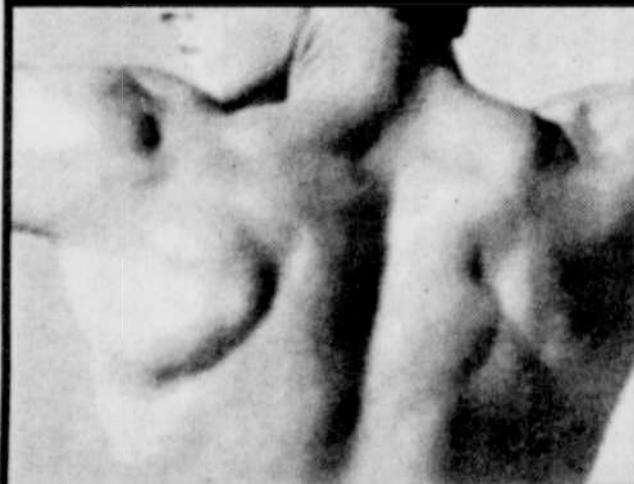
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Sebastian Jambor (left) and Anne Hill accept the 2003 Fair Workplace Award during the Oregonians Against Discrimination Luncheon on April 22 at the Hilton Hotel

PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS