

TOWN HALL FOCUSES ON QUEER LEGAL RIGHTS

The Human Rights Campaign and Basic Rights Oregon are joining forces to present "Fighting for Fairness," a town hall meeting about queer legal rights, from 6 to 9 p.m. July 10 at Metropolitan Community Church of Portland, 2400 N.E. Broadway.

The event will kick off with a social hour featuring host Sam Adams, Mayor Vera Katz's chief of staff. This will be followed by one hour of presentations and one hour of questions and answers moderated by Senate Democratic Leader Kate Brown of Portland.

Panelists will include Dan Furmanky, HRC's Western senior field organizer; Roey Thorpe, BRO executive director; and attorneys Carl Kiss, Richard Schneider and Ruben Rivera, who will discuss employment, financial and immigration issues, respectively. Information also will be available from event co-sponsors MCC, the Lesbian Community Project, the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Rights Task Force, the National Center for Lesbian Rights and Love Sees No Borders.



Lisa Bennett

Lisa Bennett, HRC FamilyNet deputy director, plans on explaining how families can protect themselves using current laws as well as how they can get involved and effect positive change. She also will discuss the implications of Ontario's approval of same-sex marriages and

the U.S. Supreme Court's decision overturning the 13 remaining state laws banning sodomy.

"I think that that was absolutely a sea change in our environment and that we'll really see more and more people emboldened to claim the rest of their rights that are indeed their rights," Bennett told *Just Out*. "There's a certain level of optimism that people feel now, and it's an incredible moment to seize that."

SENATE HEARS GAY RIGHTS BILL

The state Senate Rules Committee heard testimony June 19 regarding a bill that would ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

A total of 15 people testified, including Beaverton Mayor Rob Drake and Oregon Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner. Other testimony served to document the widespread discrimination that still exists against people who are gay, lesbian, bi and trans throughout the state.

Senate Bill 786 adds sexual orientation and gender identity to Oregon's civil rights laws and covers the areas of employment, housing, public accommodation, education and public programs. Several municipalities—including Portland, Multnomah County, Salem and Eugene—have similar legislation, but folks who live or work elsewhere are not protected by existing law.

"Many people believe that this kind of discrimination is already illegal," said Roey Thorpe, executive director of Basic Rights Oregon, which introduced the bill. "So they think we're asking for something special or above and beyond everyone else. In fact, discrimination is not only rampant, but it's legal in most of the cities in our state."

Not all of the testimony was positive, however. Lon and Bonnie Mabon of the Oregon Citizens Alliance and New Covenant Ministries International—a religious nonprofit corporation formed last year—sent a letter urging senators "to promote good over evil" by voting against the bill.

"It is a known fact that the homosexuals, bisexuals, transgendered and transsexual individuals do not fit the criteria for a protected class status provided by the courts and civil rights authorities," they wrote. "They have not suffered a history of discrimination evidenced by lack of ability to obtain economic income, adequate education or cultural opportunity.... They have not exhibited obvious, immutable or distinguishing characteristics such as race, color, gender or national origin that define them as a discrete group.... They have not clearly demonstrated political powerlessness."

LATINA CLAIMS BIAS AMONG PORTLAND PODER

Since winning the title of Miss Gay Latina Oregon in late May, Mizz Monique Moore says she has experienced recurring discrimina-



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Miss Gay Latina Oregon Mizz Monique Moore was nowhere to be found on Poder Latino de Oregon's float at Portland Pride 2003

tion from Portland's queer Latino community because she doesn't speak Spanish.

A week after the pageant, Moore performed during Latino Dance Night at C.C. Slaughters. She claims that the disc jockey intentionally played the wrong music and that the master of ceremonies derided her, mocking how she could say only "hola" and "adios" in Spanish.

She says she again was scorned at the Pride parade June 15, when a seat on the Latino float

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