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NORTHWEST newsbriefs

QUEERS FIGHT FOR FAIRNESS

About 75 people came to Metropolitan Community Church on July 10 to learn about "Fighting for Fairness." The timing of the town hall couldn't have been better, as last month's decriminalization of sodomy in the United States and legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada have forever changed the landscape for queer rights.

Speakers included Dan Furmansky and Lisa Bennett of the Human Rights Campaign, Roey Thorpe of Basic Rights Oregon and Carl Kiss, the attorney who successfully argued 1998's landmark case *Tanner vs. Oregon Health Sciences University*. Attorney Richard Schneider explained how couples can protect themselves in financial matters such as estate planning.

Immigration attorney Ruben Rivera urged Salem-area voters to contact U.S. Rep. Darlene Hooley, the only Democratic member of Oregon's congressional delegation who has not signed on as a co-sponsor of the Permanent Partners Immigration Act. The legislation would modify a federal statute to provide same-sex partners of U.S. citizens and same-sex partners of lawful permanent residents the same immigration rights that legal spouses of U.S. residents enjoy.

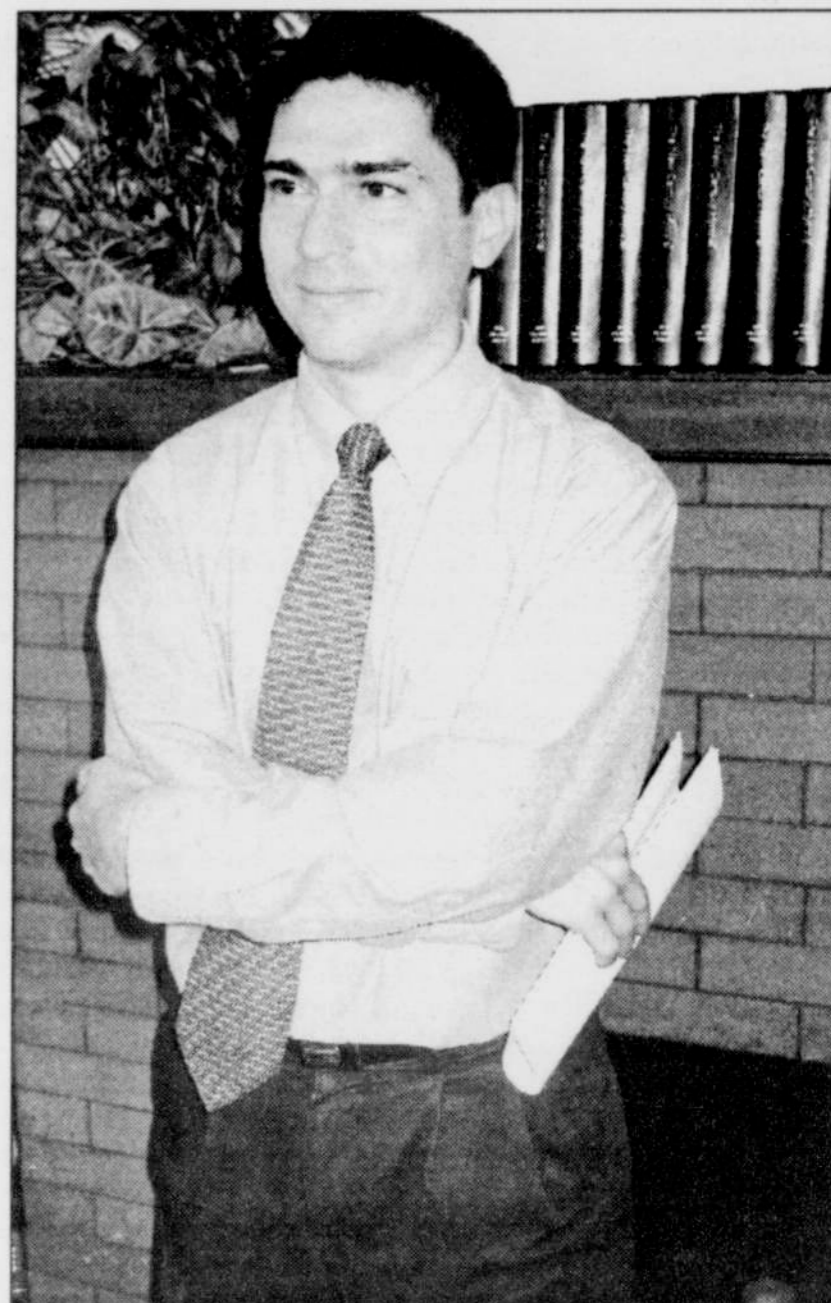


PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

Ruben Rivera was one of the attorneys on hand for the "Fighting for Fairness" town hall meeting July 10

MSNBC DROPS SAVAGE; WILL KXL FOLLOW SUIT?

Shortly after MSNBC canceled Michael Savage's anti-gay talk show, the Portland-based Coalition Against Hate Radio called upon the management of KXL-AM, owner Paul Allen and the station's advertisers, including Tri-Met, to end their support for his radio program.

The shock jock was fired for verbally attacking a self-identified gay caller during the July 5 edition of *Savage Nation*. After cutting off the man, whose comments were edited out of the broadcast, the host referred to him as a "sodomist," a "sodomite" and said, among other things, "You should only get AIDS and die, you pig."

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation brought his remarks to the attention of MSNBC executives July 7 and called on them to hold him accountable for his attacks. The media watchdog group had been keeping an eye on him since Feb. 12, when the cable network announced that it had offered him a weekly talk show.

In a March 7 *St. Petersburg Times* article, columnist Eric Deggans asked MSNBC president and general manager Erik Sorenson what might happen if Savage engaged in his trademark verbal assaults on queers and other minorities, including use of terms such as "Turd World" or "homosexual perversion." Sorenson said: "Those kinds of statements will not be permitted. And if they do happen, they won't happen more than once."

Prompted by a GLAAD-led education campaign, virtually every major national sponsor withdrew its support from MSNBC's *Savage Nation*, with only remnant advertising

from small companies (many of whom are unaware their ads appeared during the show) and NBC promos and public service announcements filling air time.

"Savage was fired from his cable TV show for using the same kind of hate speech that he frequently uses on the radio," said Rose Walker of the Coalition Against Hate Radio, which has been documenting his remarks for almost two years. His targets have included not only gay men, lesbians, women, people of color, immigrants and Muslims but also librarians, teachers, college professors, lawyers and judges.

The coalition has succeeded in convincing various radio advertisers, including Portland State University and Portland General Electric, not to air their spots during Savage's program. The growing opposition also has resulted in his removal from KUGN-AM in Eugene, and efforts to take him off the air in Medford are under way.

For more information call 503-699-5432.

WAL-MART CAVES AFTER SEATTLE GROUP LAUNCHES SHAREHOLDER CAMPAIGN

Wal-Mart Stores—the nation's largest private employer—has taken an important step toward equality for its more than 1 million workers by adding sexual orientation to its nondiscrimination policy.

The New York Times revealed the change in a Page One story July 1, in which a Wal-Mart spokeswoman said, "It's the right thing to do for our employees." She attributed the new policy in part to gay employees inside Wal-Mart who had written a letter to senior management saying that unless the company changed its policy, they would "continue to feel excluded."

With this development Wal-Mart joins 318 other Fortune 500 companies in protect-