

Speak Out

are not rogues. After all, in the English and American judicial tradition, judges have been creating law—we call it the common law—for about 1,000 years. I have to defend the judicial system in this respect.

As to a proposed constitutional amendment:

1. **Premature.** From a legal point of view, there is no need for an amendment and will be none until the U.S. Supreme Court rules that a state must give "full faith and credit" to the public acts of another state. These would include marriage, domestic partnership or civil union or the recognition of one or more rights usually given to legally married people.

2. **Intrusive government.** The fundamentalists always insist on modifying the traditional Republican view of government by insisting on an intrusive government if it forces compliance with their narrow views.

3. **Removal of rights.** Prohibition was enacted by the fundamentalists. They did not understand the genius of the Constitution then, and they haven't learned anything from repeal of Prohibition since then. The Federal Marriage Amendment is nothing but another attempt to have the government do their bidding.

4. **Politically divisive.** The proposed

amendment would sharpen divisions within the country without any need for such a division. In addition, endorsement of the proposed amendment by the Republican Party or GOP officials will drive millions of voters away from the party. About 1 million gays voted for President Bush in the last election, and I figure there are at least two sympathetic votes for each of those. In return for the loss of those votes in an election likely to be decided by less than 3 percentage points, the amendment brings practically no additional votes from among the extreme right wing of the party—a damaging tradeoff that thoughtless Republicans ignore.

LEE COLEMAN
Aloha

Never fear

TO THE EDITOR:

For decades, the homosexual community has been under attack by conservative fundamentalists. Slowly, because of fear, gays and straights across the nation have begun to speak out against the outmoded way of thinking that there is only one definition of marriage—a

uncertainty of the permanence of these marriages.

People who have gotten married in San Francisco these past few weeks are acting from the depths of their souls out of love for each other. How it will play out politically is secondary to the spiritual and emotional expression and validation it displays.

Congratulations to all the newlyweds!

JEANNE MEYER
Vancouver, Wash.

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Quite honestly, I can see both sides of the question and say yes to each. Mayor Newsom believes he is upholding the true Constitution, both of the United States and of California, where every person is entitled to equal access and treatment. I believe he is simply interpreting the words as they were intended so many decades ago. Perhaps this nation should pay more attention to that document as well.

Was the Boston Tea Party a poorly timed maneuver that only complicated matters further? The colonists who participated didn't seem to think so. And look where it got them. Was it the wrong thing to do? I don't believe so. Was the activism at the Stonewall Inn poorly timed, or were those involved just tired of the conditions leading up to that event? Was it the wrong thing to do? I don't believe so.

Sometimes we just have to do what must be done and see where the pieces fall. I am excited for what may come from all of this and honored to have been but a small part of the tea party! I am looking forward to having my marriage to Debra, my partner of 19 years, recognized and given all the very same rights my own brother and sister now enjoy from their own marriages.

MARY ANN HUMPHREY-KEEVER
Portland

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Gavin Newsom did the right thing. Granted, we've seen unprecedented gains for our

"union for life of one man and one woman in the holy estate of matrimony" (Murphy vs. Ramsey, 1885).

After years of struggle, same-sex relationships have become more accepted, but merely acknowledging these relationships is not enough. Why shouldn't the partners in these relationships be afforded the same rights as other committed couples? Do we love each other any less? Are we any less able to make lifetime choices? Or is it merely that people are afraid of what they don't understand?

It has taken years for the gay community to make the strides it has, and it will take many more years to eliminate this discrimination, which is based in fear. And like those who fought for civil rights and equality in the past—Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King Jr.—thousands of men and women, gay and straight, across the nation will not give up before the battle is won.

Perhaps Mayor Newsom said it best: "America has struggled since its inception to eradicate discrimination in all forms. California's Constitution leaves no doubts; it leaves no room for any form of discrimination."

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civil rights in the courts in the past few months, but the law moves slowly, and it does so by design. Unfortunately, the "deliberate speed" of the law too frequently favors those who oppose change.

Mayor Newsom gave the law just what it needed: a good swift kick in the ass. By declaring that San Francisco would not discriminate against same-sex couples, he forced the California courts to consider the conflict between the state constitution and the law that attempts to restrict marriage to heterosexual couples. A court can't address issues that aren't presented to it; now the California courts will have an opportunity to do the right thing.

Will there be backlash? Of course. But that can work both ways. Those who would keep us second-class citizens will protest and nominate sympathetic politicians, but so can we. The critics say Newsom's actions will just complicate matters, but that's how it works. Real progress is never smooth and peaceful. Real progress only comes about when someone is brave enough to take a stand for what he believe is right, no matter the cost. That's what Gavin Newsom did, and he should be supported for it.

PATRICIA HANSEN
Portland

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The righting of deeply rooted social injustices have almost without exception required courageous acts of civil disobedience. Those who have succeeded are not remembered as lawbreaking rebels but as pioneering heroes who have made the world a better place.

Countless others have made important progress without monumental victories or broad recognition. Gavin Newsom is engaged in just such a courageous act, and whether his efforts lead to a monumental victory or are limited to the happiness of the couples married due to his courage, we should consider him a hero for fighting for his convictions and for social justice.

STEVE KEMPER
Portland

needs to be answered. When we went down Feb. 13 to get married, we knew the magnitude of this action by San Francisco. It is the start that we've all been waiting for, not only for marriage equality but for recognition that we are real, legitimate and loving human beings who aren't driven by an uncontrolled need to have sex wherever there's a hole in the wall.

People need the opportunity to see that we haven't "chosen" a lifestyle. We simply are who we are, and deserve the same rights and privileges as anyone else. Mayor Newsom saw this, the courts in Massachusetts saw this, and the Supreme Court has seen it. Now, it's time for everyone else to know.

JASON EVANS
Portland

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I think that it is a brave and bold gesture and that it is bringing out a lot of opinions from op-ed writers, columnists and religious leaders. This is good, as the more discussion there is, the more chances there are to explain the reasons for (and against) same-sex marriage.

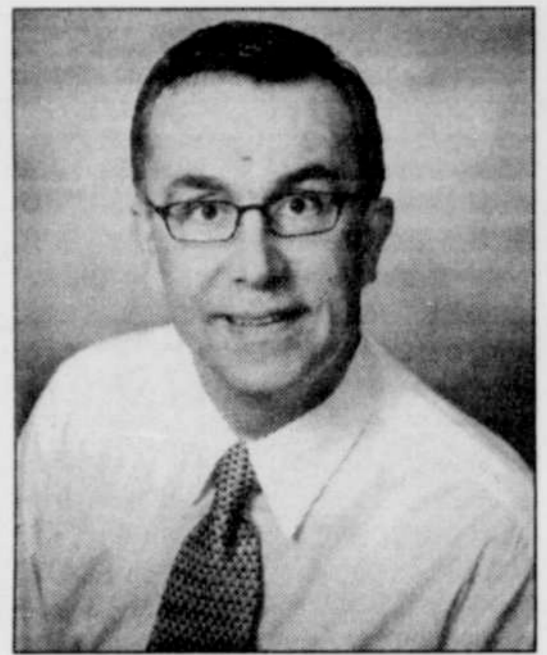
When I was growing up in the South, even heterosexual sex was not discussed, and anything else was a perversion. Actually, a lot of heterosexual sex was considered perverted! In this era closets should be open, and no subject should be off-limits, if discussed in a calm and rational way with tolerance for diverse opinions. Let the dialogues begin!

JEAN M. ELLIS
Portland

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What an amazing response this act of courage has elicited! There are so many of us who have had our private commitment ceremonies and drawn up the legal documents to protect our families as best we can. The drive to have our families, our relationships legitimized by society in the form of the government is overwhelming, despite the

next ISSUE Regardless of the outcome, do you feel the Multnomah County Commission followed the proper procedure in deciding to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples? Was the process handled appropriately? Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)



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