

Speak Out

Save your ethics lesson

TO THE EDITOR:

Marty Davis' editorial voicing her concerns about Multnomah County Commission Chair Diane Linn opening the door to gay marriages was certainly a bit of rain on the parade of coupled gay men and women applying for marriage licenses ["Be All That You Can Be," March 5]. Kind of a cross between an obituary and a wedding announcement.

Davis feels Linn's process was "tarnished" and has ignited the wrath of previously splintered religious factions who will now pound us into the ground. Davis seems to favor more time and careful coalition building to nudge straights into ratifying same-sex marriage. If she read her own paper, she would notice the gay marriage train has already left the station. And it is straight politicians and judges from coast to coast who are standing up in defense of gay marriage.

Why should Linn be faulted? She read Oregon's public meetings and records law, avoided a quorum by meeting singly with all but one commissioner so as not to infract it and asked for a legal opinion on whether state law prohibited same-sex marriages. When the opinion was affirmative, she didn't create public policy, she allowed gays access to marriage privileges (and responsibilities) that straights already enjoy.

And for this, Davis wants us to feel a little bit guilty? A little bit shamed that we might endorse the old ends-justifies-the-means saw when it benefits us? Sorry, Ms. Davis. Save your ethics lessons. I can't quite muster a tear for homophobe Lonnie Roberts, who was politically outmaneuvered by four gutsy women who decided to do the right thing. If there's a "values conflict" in your mind, Ms. Davis, then check the political landscape.

President Bush has called for a constitutional amendment to prevent legal universal recognition of gay marriage. He has declared moral war. On us. He has endorsed homophobia. Let's focus our ethical outrage on Bush and not Linn. And let's all drop our well-learned abused wife syndrome, where we stay nicely behaved around our straight abusers and hope that someday they'll stop kicking the shit out of us and maybe love us a bit more. Hell will freeze over before that happens.

GORDON JOHNSTON
Portland

Get your facts straight

TO THE EDITOR:

It's one thing to disagree on matters of opinion, as I sometimes do with your editorials, but it's something else when an editorial reveals a misunderstanding of the most basic facts—in this case, how our county government works.

The Multnomah County Commission both administers state laws (in this case the marriage laws) and legislates county ordinances. These two functions are quite different, and it's important to understand the difference.

For administrative issues, no public hearings are required or expected. Only when the commission creates or changes a county law are public hearings and the full participation of the commissioners required.

Your hypothetical (in which four commissioners exclude the fifth and enact a Defense of Marriage Act in Multnomah County) is completely off base, as no law was enacted or changed in this instance. A state law was interpreted. This is something the county executive does daily, and has always done, without public hearings or consultation with the commissioners. The county commission has no authority to create or change state marriage laws, only a duty to issue marriage licenses according to state law and the state constitution. And a duty, I might add, to interpret the constitution as it applies to county functions.

What Linn did (and courageously in my opinion) was to give instructions to a county department, as she does routinely, relying on what the county attorney and an outside attorney told her the law required. This is fully within her power—it is her responsibility alone—and has nothing to do with the other commissioners. It requires no commission vote and no public input. It is simply part of her job as the county executive. It was perhaps misleading that three of the four commissioners did a press conference with her—it might have helped make this clearer to the public if she alone had announced the change.

You should check with a knowledgeable source before you write editorials having to do with legal matters and not rely on *The Oregonian*. About this issue they either deliberately or inadvertently misled the public on how the Multnomah County Commission is set up to work.

We should all be giving our unqualified gratitude to Linn and to the other commissioners and citizens who encouraged her to act.

RUTH GUNDLE
Portland

You're in the Army now

TO THE EDITOR:

Marty Davis asks, "Are we prepared to enlist as frontline troops in the culture war?" Count me—among innumerable others, I'm certain—ready, willing and able.

BOB MENSEL
Portland

Judge not

TO THE EDITOR:

We stood in line March 3 in the wind, cold and rain for almost four hours to participate in the historic event of receiving our marriage license.

After 23 years of being a couple, we never thought we would live to see this day. We were married in the late afternoon at Keller Auditorium in one of the happiest moments of our life together seconded only when, as a gay couple, we adopted our son.

I want to say Basic Rights Oregon did a fantastic job in both venues. Their staff and volunteers worked so well to assist us to fill out the forms correctly and get in the right lines. The entire situation flowed smoothly because of their good work. They need to be commended for a job well done!

The presence of the organization Love Makes a Family made the long, cold wait much easier with the treats of hot beverages and doughnuts. As gay parents, we need to join this group.

We hope the irony of police patrolling to protect the people in line from violence from others has not gone unnoticed.

Finally, we believe Marty Davis owes Diane Linn an apology for the remarks made about her in the Feb. 20 issue ["California, Here We Come"]. It now is evident that Linn did have the courage to issue marriage licenses. Perhaps Davis should keep her unfounded negative assumptions and judgments of others out of print.

DALE AND DAVID SCHELL
Portland

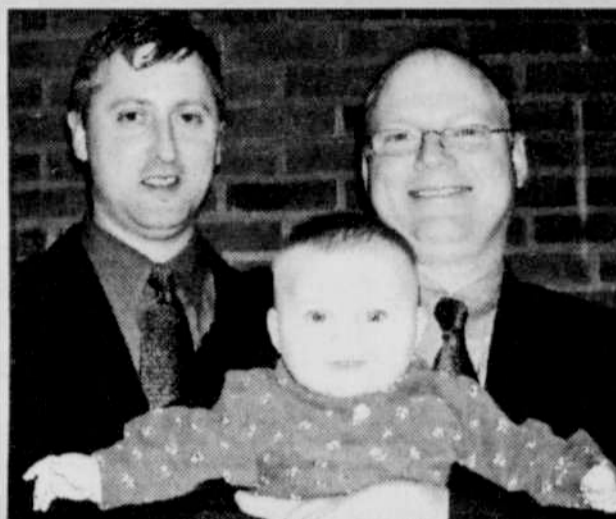
Yellow journalism

TO THE EDITOR:

On March 7 *The Oregonian* ran a front-page story with the title "54 Percent in Oregon Oppose Same-Sex Marriage, Poll Says." I sent the following letter to the newspaper and hope my fellow gays and lesbians and our friends in the community will also contact the editor to protest such irresponsible reporting and sensationalism:

The term "yellow journalism" was coined during the 1890s when the only source of news for Americans was the newspapers. At this time it was a common practice to report the editor's interpretation of the news rather than objective journalism. During this period of time the public had little means of verification, so anything written in the newspaper was considered to be factual. The editors, realizing the power they had over the public, used this to their advantage to sensationalize the news and sell more papers. It is disturbing to see that in 2004, *The Oregonian* continues to employ "yellow journalism" tactics as a way to sell papers.

notables



Portlanders Mark Richard Tesauro (left) and Raymond James Friedmann Jr. were married Nov. 22 in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Tesauro, son of Richard and June Tesauro of Dallas, Texas, is a graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology and received his Ph.D. in chemistry from University of Texas at Austin. He works in research and development at Integrated Device Technology in Hillsboro.

Friedmann, son of Raymond and Carol Friedmann of Austin, Texas, is a graduate of St. Edwards University. He is a stay-at-home parent for the newlyweds' 9-month-old daughter, Ceriwen Diane Friedmann-Tesauro, but worked previously at PACE Credit Union.

The couple, who have been together nearly 13 years, met in Austin and have resided in Dallas and Phoenix, Ariz.

Donations may be made to Love Makes a Family.

Did you know Just Out publishes free wedding announcements? Submit your story and photo at www.justout.com!

The March 7 story "54 Percent in Oregon Oppose Same-Sex Marriage, Poll Says" is a textbook example of "yellow journalism" at work. A total of 400 people were polled, and, based on the results, a story was not only written but placed in the top section of the front page (prime real estate for a newspaper). A poll of 400 people would hardly be considered large enough to be a representative sample group to make a blanket statement of the views of the state's voters.

I am furious that a newspaper would dare print such trash, using unscientific polls and then attempting to pass this information off as factual. This type of biased, sensationalized reporting using unscientific methods has no

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