

In a surprising move, Multnomah County Chair Diane Linn issued an apology May 6 for making what she called "some significant mistakes" throughout the past year.

Specifically, she says she has fallen short of the county's "cornerstone value" of "public involvement in decision-making." Linn feels she has "not lived up to this standard as I've made some important decisions involving our library, our inclement weather policy and most recently our decision regarding marriage equality."

Linn told *Just Out* that, in retrospect, she "should have facilitated broader communication with the public as we considered the constitutionality of this monumental decision." She also regrets not informing Commissioner Lonnie Roberts sooner of the decision to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

## WHO'S SORRY NOW?

County Chair Diane Linn apologizes, but not for same-sex marriage

by Meg Daly and Jim Radosta

Roey Thorpe, executive director of Basic Rights Oregon, says she thinks "it's a shame that Diane Linn feels she needs to apologize. BRO doesn't think she has anything to apologize for."

Thorpe says Linn's apology is evidence of the political risk involved for a public official to take a courageous stance on human rights. "We have to understand that this is [Linn's] way of acknowledging some people were angry because they felt caught off guard."

Despite her apology about process, Linn is firm in her advocacy of marriage equality. "I am very proud of and don't regret for one moment my role in supporting marriage equality in Multnomah County," she says. "I am unequivocal in my support for same-sex marriage."

### Attorneys Ask Washington Court to Fast-Track Case

Telling a state court that same-sex couples in Washington need the protections and security that marriage provides, Lambda Legal and the Northwest

Women's Law Center filed papers May 7 seeking a prompt ruling in their case without a trial.

The lawsuit was filed two months ago on behalf of same-sex couples who were denied marriage licenses in King County, arguing that this violates the state constitution's guarantees of equality, liberty and privacy for all. The case was the first of its kind to be filed in Washington since the Massachusetts high court ruled that same-sex couples are entitled to full marriage under that state's constitution.

"Today, we're telling the court that the legal issues in this case are clear," attorney Jennifer C. Pizer said. "Couples in Washington shouldn't have to wait through a long legal process to get the protections they need—and that only marriage can provide. This case seeks full marriage for lesbian and gay couples in Washington—nothing more and nothing less."

Attorneys for King County and Washington state have agreed to respond promptly to the motion for summary judgment. Pizer is asking the court to hold oral argument and to decide the case quickly after the briefs are filed.

"Since that first day in San Francisco when lesbian and gay couples began getting married, the nation has again been asked whether it's really fair to deny marriage to loving couples—and whether anyone else is really harmed when these couples get married," she said. "In Washington, same-sex couples can see that just to

their north, in Canada, their relationships can be fully respected, but they are treated like legal strangers at home. Our clients pay taxes in Washington, and they want to take their vows in Washington."

Washington is among 38 states with laws explicitly prohibiting same-sex couples from marrying. The plaintiffs seek a judgment that would strike down the anti-gay restriction as unconstitutional and would order county clerks to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

### Group Celebrates Marriage Equality, Desegregation

Love Makes a Family commemorated May 17 the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision to strike down public school segregation and the first day that same-sex couples were allowed to marry in Massachusetts.

"Both of these events are significant in that they affirm a fundamental principle of our republic: equality for all under the law," said the Rev. Cecil Prescod, director of Love Makes a Family's Marriage Equality Project. "In both cases, the courts affirm that human rights are non-negotiable—that human rights are not special rights for a select segment of the population."

Many people saw 1954's *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling as the work of "activist" judges; afterward, a campaign was launched to impeach Chief Justice Warren. The Massachusetts decision has caused similar responses.

"This is a turning point in the country's history," said Sherrian Haggar, Love Makes a Family board member. "Young people pay the price when their parents are told they are not as good as other parents, their homes are not recognized, that they will grow up broken and different." □



Love Makes a Family's Sherrian Haggar and Cecil Prescod drew parallels between *Brown vs. Board of Education* and *Goodridge vs. Department of Public Health*



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