

Speak Out

just asking Are you concerned that the Defense of Marriage Coalition might collect enough signatures to qualify its anti-gay constitutional amendment for the November ballot? How can we convince rural Oregonians to decline to sign?

The question isn't whether the Defense of Marriage Coalition will collect enough signatures, because I don't think that there's much doubt about it. While persuading voters to refuse to sign in support of the amendment is a worthy goal, I will be surprised if we don't see this discriminatory amendment on the ballot.

The real question is this: How will we convince voters not to listen to the bigots who use scare tactics to keep voters from thinking about the issue for themselves? Oregon voters defeated anti-gay measures previously, and I hope we will do so again. I do have some confidence that even those who wouldn't support our civil rights will understand that writing any kind of discrimination into the state constitution is wrong, but I'm worried that the emotional nature of the question will override that understanding.

Progress in civil rights is not easy. It's frequently two steps forward and one and three-quarters back. We're seeing that now across the country in the form of conflicting court judgments. Our own president supports discrimination against us. We must persuade Oregon voters to refuse to agree with those who would permanently make us second-class citizens.

PATRICIA HANSEN
Portland

next issue Once Portland Pride 2004 wraps up, tell us how you feel about the changes made to this year's celebration, particularly the new parade route. Did you notice any improvement, or should things have been left alone? Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

By using religion to dictate morality for the general population is no better than living in a society that does not grant constitutional rights for freedom of religion. After all, what makes this country great is having the freedom to be who we are.

JOHN R. CASTLE II
Portland

An open letter to David Reinhard

TO THE EDITOR:

I read with great emotion your June 6 editorial in *The Oregonian* regarding gratitude toward our fathers who fought in World War II. My father joined the Navy underage, became a member of the Underwater Demolition Team, observed the dropping of both atom bombs and was decorated several times. He, like your father, takes no thanks and speaks rarely of his experiences. As you said, it was all about liberty.

So excuse me for saying he would be the first to kick your butt for your misguided and misinformed attack on gay people and same-gender marriage; he wouldn't much care for you trying to take away the liberties that he and his friends fought and died for. Especially since these marriages wouldn't affect you and your family in any way, shape or form.

He would also remind you that many of the brave men and women who fought and died in that conflict, as well as in the current war, were gay men and women who laid down their lives so that ALL people, regardless of sexual orientation, could enjoy the fruits of liberty. Even bigots like you.

He would probably also point at himself and remind you that many of the straight veterans, like himself, that you attempted to honor are parents of

...
I am concerned about what I call the "Defensive Marriage Coalition," its amendment and the pressure it can put on people in rural areas. In the rural part of the Midwest where I grew up, the social rule was that no one should be very outwardly political or opinionated—unless of course their opinion was one shared by the vast majority of their particular rural community (usually a conservative opinion).

Open-minded rural Oregonians need to be able to feel and say they aren't alone in opposing the amendment. They need to know there are others like them in great numbers in their communities so they can subvert the peer pressure to sign the petition.

In rural areas we should identify and network community leaders who are brave enough to speak out against this in their communities. Then others who do not want to sign will feel emboldened enough to refuse to do so. Few people want to feel like they will be perceived as the only one in their community who did not support a petition that (supposedly) all righteous, normal people are signing.

TOM SOPPE
Portland

nonstraight kids and that you do those veterans no honor by attacking their sons and daughters and grandchildren. Open your heart and mind, and be the person our fathers "saved the world" for.

DONALD FINCH
Portland

Thank you

TO THE EDITOR:

I would like to thank the LGBTQ community for the incredible support for my re-election campaign. I am extremely humbled and grateful to the individuals, families and community members who believe in me and helped me get re-elected.

The best part of my campaign was the opportunity to meet and get to know people in our community. I was overwhelmed by the personal stories I heard and by the many words of encouragement. I cannot adequately express what this has meant to me.

Please accept my gratitude for your generosity and support. I commit to continuing to stand up for equal rights, respect and acceptance for everyone.

MARIA ROJO DE STEFFEY
Multnomah County Commissioner

Equal justice for all

TO THE EDITOR:

As Portland celebrates Pride, I am excited to join the LGBT community in fighting for equal rights for gay Americans. I believe that Americans should embrace the diversity that makes our nation strong and recommit ourselves to ensuring that all Americans receive equal rights.

The LGBT community contributes to our

nation in so many ways, in every corner of this country. And in return, you ask only for equal treatment. LGBT Americans deserve the right to make medical decisions for one another in times of crisis, the right to inherit a house purchased together and equal access to health insurance, Social Security and retirement benefits. Together we can provide this simple justice.

The Bush administration repeatedly uses gay rights as a political tool to divide the nation. That's just wrong. I am committed to using the power of the White House to advance equal rights for all Americans, including gay Americans. We don't need a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. We need to find a way to provide all American families with full and equal rights. We don't need opposition to hate crime legislation. We need to reject hate and embrace acceptance. And we don't need a president who plays politics with gay adoption. We need a president who works every day to protect and support all children and families.

I want to lead an America where the inscription "Equal Justice Under the Law" has both meaning and value for all Americans, not just some Americans. And I need your help to make that happen. Stop by the John Kerry for President booth to join with me today as we celebrate Pride. Let's work to make an America where all Americans are celebrated with pride and treated with dignity and fairness.

JOHN KERRY
Washington, D.C.

True colors

TO THE EDITOR:

This year, as you watch or take part in the Pride Parade, as you linger among the elephant ears, pay attention to the community that surrounds you.

I don't just mean stop and talk to strangers, buy fun souvenirs or people-watch. Pay attention to the real diversity of our community.

It is more than just family and LGBT diversity. We are also racially diverse. Too often we forget that our LGBT community isn't just white and that we aren't all the same.

It is easy to assume we all come from the same cookie cutter, especially living in the Northwest. It is also easy to make assumptions of people and to place them into stereotypical boxes. Oftentimes we talk a good talk about diversity—but the talk ends at the LGB and T.

What about those in our community who ride the great racial and ethnic Pride Divide? Those people who find comfort and acceptance in one community but not both? This year, as Love Makes a Family's MultiQueer/Flavors program coordinator, I challenge and encourage you to look around, pay attention and truly take Pride in our community.

KRISTY EGGEN
Portland

I am not proud

TO THE EDITOR:

I am no longer proud to be a citizen of Portland. How can I have any pride in a city that allows people of color to be murdered and the cops to get off scot-free? The news coverage trivializes the protests against police violence or pits one group against another.

Several weeks back, due to recent gang shootings, my North/Northeast neighborhood was supposed to "regain our pride" by a neighborhood cleanup involving the youth. Although hopeful, it's a stretch to say this is a panacea for the current mood of the community.

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