

The time for unity is now

Oregon faces its most serious political and civil rights challenge in years

It's the journey, not the destination. These are words that resonate with strong personal meaning to me. This is the guiding philosophy that I try to use to keep a moderate pace, a calm head, a sense and enjoyment of the here and now. A journey that focuses on what's along the path ahead rather than one that charges ahead at top speed, crashing into potentially dangerous obstacles along the way. Granted, there's always the possibility that in any and all journeys we might somehow take the wrong path and become lost along the way, arriving at the destination without really knowing how, or why, we got there. More startling yet, now and then the journey will land you at a location completely different from where you'd hoped or planned to be.

Such an undesired and unhoped-for destination was reached June 30 with the arrival in Salem of 244,000 petition signatures gathered by the Defense of Marriage Coalition. This vast number virtually guarantees that Oregonians will vote in November on a constitutional amendment that, if passed, would limit marriage to being between one man and one woman. Should voters pass the initiative, all counties would be prohibited from issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

So this is where we are. This phase of the journey has ended. Questions about how and why we got here aren't important at this time. Whether we wanted to be here, whether we needed to be here—it doesn't matter. There's no going backward, we can't change the route. The simple fact is, like it or not, we're here. The proverbial battle line has been drawn. We now know indisputably that, at a minimum, nearly a quarter of a million Oregonians have taken a stance against us, on the other side of the line. We have arrived at a monumental destination.

The Defense of Marriage Coalition needed 100,840 valid signatures to qualify its initiative. They turned in 244,000. The likelihood of converting these numbers to hard votes in November leaves little doubt that the months leading up to the election are going to be costly and divisive for all Oregonians. The posturing of the coalition, the signature-gathering tactics used, the armored truck, the early submission, the white male dominance—all these are indicative of an arrogance that begs to be knocked on its butt.

In the weeks and months ahead, all will be called upon to choose a side in this battle. Newspapers will print editorials and endorsements. Readers will pen angry letters in support of or against the measure. Money will be donated by business owners; these funds will need to be tracked and reported. It will be imperative that we take a strong economic stance. There must be no financial support from our community for those who donate to the Defense of Marriage Coalition.

Basic Rights Oregon is taking the lead in the battle, and the call is out for volunteers and donations of time and money and basic office supplies and equipment to staff the campaign office. Even thought the

secretary of state has 30 days to verify the signatures, the number turned in virtually guarantees success. Massive amounts of petition-gathering violations would have to be reported and proven in order to invalidate the initiative, and this does not appear likely to happen.

Plan your summer around favorite activities, but know also that you will be called upon to help. This is by far the most serious political and civil rights issue that has faced our community in many years. The time for unity is now.

In separate news, it was reported earlier in *The Oregonian* that the state of Oregon is preparing to take financial advantage of the Bush administration's faith-based initiative programs. The state has applied for a \$15 million grant that would allow religious groups and organizations to apply to administer programs to assist substance abusers. The federal grants are dispatched through the Access to Recovery program. Nationwide there are concerns that groups might be given the opportunity to force religious views on people utilizing services. There's not a lot of familiarity with the policies and guidelines of Access to Recovery, but it would definitely seem to warrant closer scrutiny. Issues of church and state separation need to be monitored closely.

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Also on the to-be-watched list is the senatorial race in Colorado. Republican candidate Pete Coors is supporting the concept of a federal constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. As he stumps the state spewing anti-gay positions, the family business, Coors Brewing Company, is having pained visions of lost lavender dollars and is sending forth its own messages detailing advancements in progressive employment and nondiscrimination programs. The official statement from Coors states: "Pete Coors is on an unpaid leave of absence from Coors Brewing Company in order to run for the U.S. Senate. As a candidate, he'll likely be in the position of expressing views on political issues on which it is inappropriate for Coors Brewing Company to have a position. In these cases he is not speaking on behalf of Coors Brewing Company." The business is trying to distance itself from the candidate and the individual, yet unfortunately this particular individual has mighty powerful ties to the Coors Brewing Company. At the very same time that Coors is running ads in gay publications such as *Just Out*, Pete Coors is supporting a platform of opposition.

This just might be the right summer to develop a taste for iced tea. You're going to need to be refreshed, focused and ready to volunteer with the yet-unnamed campaign being launched to defeat the constitutional amendment to ban marriage for same-sex couples in Oregon. There's a lot of work to be done. Check the *Just Out* Web site frequently for updates on volunteer opportunities, community events and contact information. Our biweekly publication schedule is not adequate in these circumstances to manage, in a timely fashion, the anticipated flow of information, so we'll be expanding our coverage via the Web site. j

just out

The IN publication for the OUT population

FOUNDED 1983 • JAY BROWN AND RENÉE LACHANCE

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Letters to the editor should be limited to 500 words. Announcements regarding life transitions (births, deaths, unions, etc.) should be limited to 200 words; photos are welcome. **Deadline for submissions** to the editorial department and for the **Calendar** is the Thursday 15 days before the next publication date. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher.

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Subscriptions are \$22.50 for 12 issues. First Class (in an envelope) is \$40 for 12 issues.

Contact Just Out at P.O. Box 14400, Portland, OR 97293-0400; 503-236-1252, advertising 503-236-1253, fax 503-236-1257; e-mail justout@justout.com. Visit our Internet site at www.justout.com.

REFLECTIONS

10 years ago in just out... VOL. 11 No. 17, JULY 1, 1994



- Sweden is the third country to allow gay men and lesbians to marry. Denmark was first, in 1989, and Norway followed, in 1993. The law comes into effect the first of 1995.

- In Thailand a real estate company announced June 1 plans to build an 800-home community exclusively for gay men. The Wachira Royal Valley company will erect "Flora Town" 90 miles northeast of Bangkok.

- Five members of the Lesbian Avengers disrupted a formal dinner for the U.N. Development Fund for Women and demanded the inclusion of lesbians in all its programs.

- American Airlines has decided to join the International Gay Travel Association, which represents more than 860 gay and lesbian companies in the travel industry. The airline recently came under fire for dragging a person with AIDS off one of its flights.

- The first hearing on federal efforts to ban discrimination in employment against gay men and lesbians will be held July 20 in New York City. Nine witnesses are scheduled to testify. They include people who have suffered employment discrimination as well as representatives of national organizations who will testify to broader patterns of discrimination.

- The Pacific Northwest Women's Music and Cultural Jamboree will take place July 1 on the Western Washington University campus in Bellingham. Activities include four concerts, two dances and a workshop series.

- Catch the Snickers LaBarr show July 2 with special guests Greg Jackson, executive director of Flight to Privacy, and James C. Moeller, spokesman for Hands Off Washington.

- The new film *Go Fish* makes *Claire of the Moon* and *Desert Hearts* look like prim Victorian novels.

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