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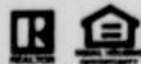
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Speak Out

The last battle

TO THE EDITOR:

When conservatives took over the GOP in the early '90s, they declared a cultural war in name of Judeo-Christian tradition and values. They admitted losing many battles, but they are now poised to fight what they call the last battle of this war: gay marriage. They are willing to force an amendment to our Constitution to prevent it, and they will do anything to win this battle.

Unfortunately, it has been hard to tell these people apart from our "friends" the Democrats. In 1994 Bill Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act because he believed in the sanctity of marriage. In 2000 Al Gore agreed with presidential candidate George W. Bush that marriage should be for straight people only because it was sacred.

In 2004 John Kerry, John Edwards, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Howard Dean and others said marriage shouldn't be a civil right available to gays and lesbians because of its sanctity. (Do the top Democratic leaders really believe we are impure, evil entities?) Kerry criticized Bush's call for the Federal Marriage Amendment because he says it should be a state issue, but Kerry has also supported an amendment to his state's constitution banning gays from civil marriage. It's really hard to tell the difference.

Democrats are outraged because Republicans are forcing them to go on the record about gay marriage. Ten years ago Republicans did the exact same thing with DOMA and many Democrats voted for it. (Kerry voted against it.)

We already know Republicans hate us (or, as they say, our "sin") and want us back (and locked) in the closet. We don't know, however, if Democrats don't want to go on the record because they don't want to lose the votes of "moderates" or because they agree with Republicans that we are entitled to fewer rights than

straight people because the Bible says so. Personally, I'd like to get their vote, on record, again.

The Democratic Party does have a better record on gay issues than the GOP. But we have been reminded that they are not our natural electoral choice. Still, let's consider the alternative: four more years of bloody Crusades abroad and greedy feudalism and ruthless Inquisition within. (Yes, we have regressed a few centuries.)

Marriage is a basic civil right issue supported by the notion of equality of the Constitution; civil rights shouldn't be up for debate. However, gay marriage might be just the first civil and constitutional right to go if this regime continues.

Many of us have been too indifferent to the electoral process. This has to change. We cannot afford extreme liberal positions, we cannot afford Ralph Nader, and we cannot afford indifference. We have to ensure that this administration and its counterparts in Congress are crushed in November.

And our vote is not enough. We need to be active and get all votes we can get. And for that we need to work together. We must join the campaign to rid us of Bush. And we need *Just Out* to work toward this goal.

FRANK O'NEILL
Portland

An open letter to Gordon Smith

TO THE EDITOR:

As an openly gay, God-fearing man, I'd like you to tell the rest of the Senate that I personally welcome any heterosexual married couple or family "that is without sin" to cast the first constitutional amendment. Then please tell the noisy hypocrites to shut up and stop pointing their hypocritical fingers at everyone else and work a bit harder on their own families and relationships.

Why did I choose "terrorism" as the topic for this e-mail? Because that's exactly what this so-called Federal Marriage Amendment is: terrorism from religious fanatics against another group of people—attacks from a group of people trying to "terrorize" a group of people who they don't even know and have never met.

That is supposedly only one of the absurd reasons the United States of America went to war with two countries—to combat religious fanatics who were imposing unjust and unfounded demands on people. Why is it acceptable to "liberate" some people suffering from religious tyranny, when you and others are so quick and willing to impose religious tyranny on your own people?

We don't need to worry about non-American terrorists trying to destroy our country—not when hypocrisy and arrogance from within America is doing such a good job of it already. The rest of the world just needs to be patient a little longer and watch us self-destruct by turning against ourselves.

KURT DONALD KOESTER
Portland

Fool me once...

TO THE EDITOR:

It was just announced on the evening news how our two senators will be voting on the so-called defense of marriage initiative. Ron Wyden, Democrat, will vote no. Gordon Smith, Republican, will vote yes.

Sen. Smith reached out to the gay community during his last re-election campaign in what can now be seen as a carefully contrived play for the gay vote. When it came right down to it, he voted the party line.

It particularly hurts as I for the first time ever

voted for a Republican by voting for Sen. Smith. I feel bamboozled and made a fool of. I can only say that I would try anything once, and as far as voting Republican, once and once only is more than enough.

FRANK MARSHALL
Portland

Control the population

TO THE EDITOR:

For this year's World Population Day on July 11, it is imperative that we recognize the critical connection between population and family planning.

As our world population soars beyond 6.4 billion people, many women around the world are faced with few choices regarding their reproductive lives. A Mother's Promise campaign, along with one of its co-sponsors, Population Connection, works to strengthen the connection between population and family planning.

A decade ago, the nations of the world—including the United States—gathered in Cairo, Egypt, to make a promise to mothers around the world: that they would find solutions to problems faced by millions in poor countries trying to make a better life for their children. They drafted the Cairo Program of Action, a road map to help nations address a broad range of issues, from women's health and girls' education to environmental protection and economic security—issues crucial to safeguarding the lives of people everywhere.

As stated in the activist kit for A Mother's Promise: "The ultimate shape of global population will depend on the availability of information, access to family planning services and the individual decisions of every person on earth. Those choices will depend in part on whether nations fulfill their commitments to the International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action."

Ten years later, the problems addressed in the Program of Action are still crucial, but we have not met our promise to face them. I am writing in honor of World Population Day to urge continued support of A Mother's Promise campaign. Joining the campaign is easy. Visit www.amotherspromise.org and sign the petition. And then tell someone else to do the same. Most importantly, tell your congressman that you believe in the promise of Cairo and that if women and girls and families are going to be healthy and strong, we as a nation must keep our promise to help them have a better life.

Show the world that we know we are partners in the care of all people and our planet. A great nation keeps its promises.

ALBERT KAUFMAN
Portland

Legal eagles

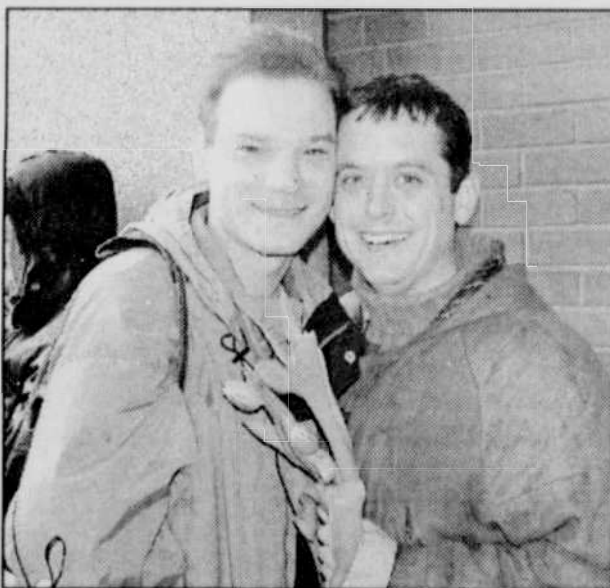
TO THE EDITOR:

Last fall, we turned to the *Just Out* pages to find an attorney. We found David W. Owens, P.C. & Associates, Attorneys at Law.

We want your readers to know that Mr. Owens and his staff are super. They are friendly, respectful, highly competent and sensitive to our special needs and provide the highest-quality service. They provided various legal services for us—some quite complicated—expeditiously as we were pressed to move to the United Kingdom for a while. We enthusiastically endorse your readers to consider contacting this firm when legal issues arise.

MICHAEL FARMILOE
PHILLIP CLIFFORD
Henstead, Suffolk, United Kingdom

notables



After 10 years of commitment, Terry Clarke (left) and Ryan Duncan were married March 5 at a friend's home in Portland. After a two-hour wait in line with their closest friends, they rushed off to the Rev. Eric Torrell's home and were wed within 15 minutes.

Clarke manages two contemporary furniture showrooms, P.H. Reed and P.H. Reed Bedroom. Duncan works as a special education instructional assistant for the Beaverton School District.

"We were so happy and proud to be a part of this moment in history," the couple told *Just Out*. "It was a moment that none of us will forget anytime soon. Thanks to all that made this possible for us."

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