

# It's time to fight

Does an anti-gay vote in Missouri spell doom and gloom for Oregon?

From my office parking lot I can be on Interstate 84 in mere seconds, and by continuing in a southeasterly direction I could arrive, within days, to Missouri, home of composer Scott Joplin, whose birthplace is celebrated as the "Cradle of Ragtime." I point this out only because it's all that I know about Missouri. However, as of Aug. 3 there's really no reason to want to visit this state, ragtime fan or not. Missouri does not welcome me, nor does she appear to hold in esteem her thousands of gay and lesbian citizens.

On polling day, Missourians voted 71 percent to 29 percent to amend their state constitution to define marriage as between a man and a woman only. Voter turnout exceeded all expectations by as many as 400,000 people. Although not the first state to add a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage, Missouri was the first to do so since the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled last fall that gays could marry in that state. This is viewed as a stunning defeat by proponents of same-sex marriage. Even the most masterful wordsmiths cannot find a positive spin for the Missouri election results.

Opponents of same-sex marriage were quick to praise Missourians and to savor their victory. "This vote reveals that support for traditional marriage is strong across party lines," said Robert Knight, director of the Culture and Family Institute at Concerned Women for America, a conservative group in Washington, D.C. "We expect similar victories in other states beginning with Louisiana in September, and then following through to 10 other states or more." The next vote comes in Louisiana in September followed by Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, Oklahoma, Oregon and Utah, which all go to the polls Nov. 2. Two more states, North Dakota and Ohio, could vote on amendments if petitions to get the measure on the ballot are certified.

To our immediate north, on the next day, a Washington court ruled that same-sex couples must be allowed to marry, explaining that a law prohibiting them from marrying violates the state's constitution. This ruling has no immediate impact, and no same-sex marriages will occur in King County or Washington; the ruling simply paves the way to the Washington Supreme Court, bypassing the Court of Appeals.

Here at home, the No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign launched its statewide effort at a kickoff rally Aug. 3 in Portland. While well-attended by supporters, the event appeared to go somewhat unnoticed by Portland's major media outlets. Press seating was mostly empty, and only two of the city's television stations sent camera crews. In an

unusual turnaround, mayoral candidate Tom Potter was not present, but his opponent, Jim Francesconi, stood in with the campaign group. City Commissioner Randy Leonard was also present and mingling with the crowd. Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski is noted as an endorser of the campaign to defeat Measure 36, but to date I've seen no official statement from his office regarding his position. Democratic leaders nationwide are not proving to be the stalwart supporters we'd hope for—especially in light of the years of donations and efforts that the gay, lesbian, bi and trans community has put into securing their places in office.

As a matter of observation only, sans commentary, I did note that no Multnomah County commissioners were in attendance at the kickoff rally for No on 36.

Oregonians are going to have to rally strongly to defeat Measure 36. The campaign has set goals of raising \$2 million. Combining that figure with the \$1.5 million that the other side estimates it will raise and spend makes my head spin—spin with visions of money that could be spent on schools and education, on services for aging and ill Oregonians, on securing the election of progressive candidates, on youth programs and funding for new jobs. Think of the better good that could come to all Oregonians if this money was spent elsewhere.

In addition to the kickoff in Portland, the campaign will open offices in Bend, Eugene, Salem, Corvallis and Jackson County. "While we know that many Oregonians are unsure about this issue right now, we also know this race is winnable," campaign manager Aisling Coghlan said. "The more Oregonians hear about this amendment, the more they oppose it. We are confident that when voters learn more about the harmful and unintended consequences of this amendment, they will reject it."

Let's be looking hard and close at Missouri and what worked and what didn't work there. About the only positive note that can be attributed to this loss is that it clearly sends the message that this battle is real, that this battle must be taken seriously and that there is no room—absolutely no room—for apathy, complacency or false optimism. It's not uncommon for our community to scorn pragmatic realists while holding aloft the righteous mantle of disingenuous optimism. A little fear would be neither inappropriate nor meaningless. When you fear loss of something valuable, you fight harder to keep it. There was loss in Missouri; don't for a minute think it couldn't happen here.

It's time to face with honesty the possibility of defeat. It's time to fight. **JM**

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## just out

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## REFLECTIONS

20 years ago in

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• A gay police officer in San Francisco has been accused of unofficerlike conduct after he was videotaped kissing another man at this year's Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Parade.

• A bill designed to make it easier for women to earn pension rights, first introduced in 1981 by Rep. Geraldine Ferraro of New York, was passed by a voice vote in the House last week and is on its way to the president, who is expected to sign it.

• The first-ever Hawthorne Sidewalk Fair will feature Musica Femina, the Easy Street Hummers and others Aug. 18.

• The Lesbian Forum will feature a discussion of "Making Babies...the lesbian way" Aug. 21. Child care is provided, and wheelchair accessibility is available by calling Willow (so she can get the key to the elevator).

• The Portland Lesbian and Gay Pride

Community Band practices Aug. 22 at Atkinson School, Southeast 58th Avenue and Division Street. The band exists to promote gay pride, improve skills and be an ensemble of men and women working together.

• It's time to brush up on your hankie code and polish your leather. Yes, Aug. 27 is Women Only night at JR's Cell, a night when the boys leave the musty darkness and let the women live out their fantasies.

• In the very near future, gay men who either consider themselves at "high risk" for AIDS or who have actual concerns regarding their health will be able to take a simple test that will determine if they have been exposed to HTLV3. This retrovirus is now being considered as the most likely cause of AIDS. Other than that (which is still speculative) little more is known about HTLV3 or what a positive test really means.

• Help wanted: director of counseling for Phoenix Rising. Responsibilities include development and maintenance of the paraprofessional program and other administrative duties. Require minimum of master's degree in social work, counseling or psychology as well as experience in counseling and administration. Ten hours a week, \$640 a month.

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