

just asking How do you feel about U.S. Sens. John Kerry and John Edwards skipping the vote on the Federal Marriage Amendment? Were they running scared from an important civil rights issue, or were they playing it safe to ensure victory in November?

I honestly believe that both Kerry and Edwards support civil rights and the rights of all individuals to marry, regardless of what they say in public. It is unfortunate that they skipped out on the vote, but frankly, if playing it safe wins the White House, I am all for it.

Our nation is too immature and socially backward to be ready for something like allowing gay marriage on the federal level at this time. We need to get liberals in office, get more positive gay role models on television and slowly change middle America's perception of who a gay person is. This will take time.

DEVIN RUSSO
Portland

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All of us who have worked on Capitol Hill for U.S. senators and U.S. House members know that a so-called "procedural" vote is a damn waste of valuable time. Better the "two Johns" were out working those awful Nader states so we gays and lesbians can achieve victory.

A totally meaningless vote. A technical roll call to cut off debate in the manner of a filibuster and achieving the 66 votes of 100 senators. And a VERY transparent attempt—in the absence in 2004 of communism, allegiance pledge, flag salute/burning—at a new wedge issue. GOP Sen. John McCain of Arizona termed it a very "un-Republican" measure to amend the U.S. Constitution—and he scheduled time to speak against the Federal Marriage

Amendment from the floor of the U.S. Senate (despite his currently appearing in President Bush's television ads).

D.E. WAGNER
Santa Rosa, Calif.

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I'm not sure. But I hope it is noted by us all and they are contacted in note. Be active! They know there is no choice; we have to vote for them if we are pro-gay. The question is where it goes from here.

D. TIMOTHY BEALER
Portland

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Bitching about Kerry and Edwards' irritating political gamesmanship will not help beat Bush. They would have lost a day on the campaign trail and accomplished nothing by voting.

Kerry and Edwards may never actively support gay marriage, but they will stop the appointment of conservative judges who are imposing their so-called "Judeo-Christian values" on everybody without voter approval. For example, President Bush appointed Judge William Pryor, who recently upheld a Florida law that prevents gay people from adopting but allows child molesters to adopt children. He compared homosexuality to bestiality and pedophilia before he was appointed.

If Bush's Christian-Republican Party "activist judges" can take away basic family rights from gay people, they could easily take away other rights from gay people, such as fair employment and housing. The only way to stop this is to beat Bush by voting for Kerry and Edwards.

THOMAS KRAEMER
Corvallis

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I don't think they were either running scared or playing it safe. From what I heard on *The Randi Rhodes Show*, the Dems had a head count of how that vote was going to go and could tell that Kerry and Edwards were not needed, but they would have come back to Washington had they been needed. Their campaign schedules made it hard for them to make a trip back to Washington at that moment.

Kerry has an exceptional record on queer issues. Edwards is also a very worthy ally. Focusing on how they missed this unneeded vote (which was a vote to end debate, not a vote on the amendment itself) could serve to weaken the queer community's resolve to support this ticket. This would not be good, as this ticket's victory would be the best thing that ever happened to our community, and the less we support them the more chance that the dangerous, evil incumbent will win.

TOM SOPPE
Portland

next issue How do you feel about the July 28 Willamette Week cover story on Portland Fellowship? Was it worthwhile information, or did it lend unearned credence to the "ex-gay" movement? (Please see related item on Page 13.) Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

no choice but to say it openly, or to vote for the amendment. It's a high-profile "outing" of the most appropriate kind—forcing bigots to admit to their bigotry, or work with their opponents to defeat it.

Yes, their spinmasters have done a magnificent job of convincing God-fearing mom-and-pop types from the Midwest that "marriage" has always been a secular institution that shouldn't be legislated or redefined by "radical judges" hell-bent on its destruction. But have you heard them once say they'd undo the legal rights and responsibilities they've obtained through past legislation of the issue?

So, as a matter of compromise, why shouldn't we concede what we're told greater than 60 percent of Americans believe: Marriage, in its traditional sense, is a religious institution that should not be modified by the government. Let's give them that point, and move on to our strength.

As a secular institution, "marriage" cannot be legislated due to the separation of church and state clause. Therefore, all rights that have been conferred to straight Americans by virtue of their "marriage" must be rescinded.

We can debate the newest terminology for legal protections from now until the cows come home. Civil unions. Domestic partnerships.

Common law. The possibilities are endless. But let's get this one over with first, and call a spade a spade.

The right-wing conservatives preserve in law their definition of "marriage" as between one man and one woman. The left-wing liberals enshrine the separation of church and state. It's a win-win, which leaves to the individual churches, synagogues, temples and mosques the right and responsibility to decide the issue of morality, based on their specific spiritual views.

Maybe this is oversimplification. But the current approach is clearly a losing battle for everyone involved. It's time to say so and move on. During this political convention season, if someone else has a better idea it's high time for us to hear it.

ROBERT A. BOLEYN
West Hollywood, Calif.

Blowing my top

TO THE EDITOR:

I am amazed and disturbed by your article on role play ["The Joy of Switch Hitting," July 16].

After all these years of gay evolution, the author indicates that bottoms are equated some-

how with the feminine role. As a top of 30 years, I have to say that I have NEVER thought of bottoms as anything but equals who are the other half of my equation.

Can you believe that anyone other than straights and gays who have just come out would even go near this connotation? How degrading to gay men. Shame.

D. TIMOTHY BEALER
Portland

Alzheimer's isn't funny

TO THE EDITOR:

Although I usually get some good chuckles from reading "The Gospel According to Marc," the column in your July 16 issue also upset me ["Botoxic Shock"].

It is fine to ridicule celebrities for their obsessive cosmetic surgeries, but it is not amusing to make light of a victim suffering the memory loss caused by Alzheimer's disease—even if the object of derision is a person for whom I have no great respect, admiration or fondness. Funny? Definitely NOT.

LYLE M. TUCKER
Lake Oswego

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