

NORTHWEST newsbriefs



PHOTO BY MARTY DAVIS

U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., voted against a bill that would block access for same-sex couples to the judicial system

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and balances to strip the federal courts of their ability to review the law.... This dangerous, tragic and ill-conceived precedent will be dusted off every time people want to extend their political influence at the expense of civil liberties that may be controversial, but demand the attention from our federal courts."

Oregon's other House Democrats—David Wu, Darlene Hooley and Peter DeFazio—also voted against the bill. U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., supported it.

House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Texas, set the bill up as a "test vote" for the Federal Marriage Amendment, which died July 14 in the Senate. The American Civil Liberties Union noted that the bill makes it clear that supporters of the amendment will overwhelmingly fail the test, as they are short by at least 57 of the 290 votes necessary if it comes up for a vote in September.

"After the debacle in the Senate...there are rumors that the House Republican leadership would like to bring this doomed proposal to our chamber, in an effort to keep us away from debating issues that we can actually do something about," Blumenauer said on the House floor July 15. "The Republican leadership should take a lesson from watching the president and the leadership of the Republicans in the Senate, as they tied up the Senate for days to no avail.... Efforts to use sexual orientation as a political tool to divide this country for political advantage are shameful and will ultimately fail."

FOUNDATION ESTABLISHES MARRIAGE EDUCATION FUND

Equity Foundation announced July 29 that it will provide financial support for the development of materials and education on the subject of same-sex marriage.

Same-sex marriages have been performed in other countries, including Canada, but the concept is still new in the United States and Oregon. The Marriage Education Fund, established and funded by Equity donor advisers and other contributions, will be used to support the work of organizations involved in promoting marriage equality.

For example, many people don't know how marriage affects eligibility for benefits. And same-sex couples do not always understand the numerous financial and legal implications of marriage. "The Marriage Education Fund will benefit the entire community by providing resources for education around this important

issue," said Linda Traeger, Equity Foundation executive director.

The fund will make specific and timely grants to fund the development and dissemination of information about the impact of same-sex marriage. Grants are expected to range from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

The grants are intended to support the work of current Equity grantees that have already established expertise in this area. To qualify, grantees will need to demonstrate that they have provided education on the impact of same-sex marriage in Oregon prior to July 1.

Grants are not available for lobbying or political purposes. The application deadline is Aug. 30.

To obtain a grant application or make a contribution, call 503-231-2729, visit www.equityfoundation.org or write to P.O. Box 5696, Portland, OR 97228-5696.

FLORIDA ADOPTION BAN UPHELD

With a majority needed to grant a hearing on Florida's gay adoption ban, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit rejected a challenge to the law in a 6-6 decision July 22. Judge William Pryor—who was opposed by the U.S. Senate but appointed by President Bush during a congressional recess—voted to deny the rehearing.

"This ban will continue to undermine the best interest of thousands of children," said Cheryl Jacques, Human Rights Campaign president. "Judge Pryor has a dismal record when it comes to our families, and his vote made the difference in this case. This proves the importance of electing a president who will appoint fair-minded judges. If we defeat President Bush, Judge Pryor won't be reappointed after his term expires this year."

The American Civil Liberties Union said it is disappointed in the decision.

"Coming this close to having the whole court consider the issue is little consolation to the thousands of children in Florida foster care who are in need of permanent homes," attorney Leslie Cooper said. "The decision is especially disappointing when you consider the fact that even the judge who wrote the initial decision goes on record as saying the policy behind the ban is misguided."

The 12-member court's sharply divided decision was in response to a motion by the ACLU

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