

Getting married shouldn't have to be a political statement.

For some same-sex couples who were married in Multnomah County earlier this year, they simply wanted to walk through a door that had previously been barred to them.

Now that a constitutional amendment is on the November ballot that would make their marriages obsolete—and future gay and lesbian marriages impossible—even the most apolitical same-sex couples are being called upon to help secure marriage rights for all Oregonians.

It may seem like a given that married same-sex couples would be the first in line to defend their own marriages at the ballot box. However, according to Rebekah Kassell of the No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign, 40 percent of the Oregon same-sex couples who were married in Multnomah County are not registered to vote.

At the very least, their votes are needed to support what Kassell calls "a very winnable campaign."

No on 36 staffers are only now seeing the sense of urgency sink in among their supporters. Deputy campaign manager Beckie Lee suspects that some marriage equality supporters initially may have been "paralyzed by fear" when they learned that the amendment had made it on the ballot. She also notes that it takes time in the beginning of a campaign to ramp up the needed momentum.

Kassell says this is no time for complacency. "Some people think Oregon is a fair state and would never do this kind of thing. It would be a shame to be this close to winning and lose because we didn't do enough or take it seriously."

OUT NOW

No on 36 campaign organizers say every effort is key

by Meg Daly

Organizers say the campaign hit a turning point in recent days, with more and more volunteers buzzing around the office and canvassers out in force.

One element still needed is more participation from people like Kelly Burke, a lesbian mom who married her partner, Dolores Doyle, last March. The couple are front and center as "the face" of the campaign to defeat the amendment. They attend rallies and speak to the media about the importance of marriage rights for their family. Their story is the kind that will help influence undecided voters, Kassell says.

For Burke, telling her story goes beyond being a campaign tool. "My family's life and well-being is on the line," she says. "It's scary to think people could be voting on my life."

In the five months since she and Doyle have been married, Burke was able to get health insurance through Doyle's place of employment.

"Most people don't know the benefits [that come with a marriage license] and they haven't thought about how those rights affect someone's family," she says. "If we don't stand up for our own lives, I'm afraid no one else will."

No on 36 fund-raising coordinator Brenda



PHOTO BY MARTY DANIS

Kelly Burke (left) and Dolores Doyle speak up for marriage equality during the No on 36 campaign kickoff rally Aug. 3

Kinoshita says that not everyone has to be so public in order to help the campaign. Help is also needed in the form of donations of even small amounts of time or money.

"If everyone gives just a little bit," Kinoshita says, "it is cumulative. There will be a groundswell, and we will win."

Bill Klein, No on 36 house party organizer and a married gay man himself, adds that married same-sex couples can help the campaign simply by "talking to everyone they know"

about the impact this amendment would have on their lives.

"Every day, I put on a No on 36 sticker and walk through this city," Burke says, "and I'll admit sometimes I'm scared. I'm concerned if this is this a good thing to be doing...with a small child."

"But people need to see who we are," she says. "We have to find a way to be involved because we are the campaign." □

NO ON 36 AND KERRY CAMPAIGNS GO HAND IN HAND

According to No on 36 press secretary Rebekah Kassell, an unexpected hurdle for campaign organizers is the response from some would-be supporters that all their energy is going toward getting U.S. Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., elected president. Some folks don't feel they have any more time or money to give.

However, Kassell says the two campaigns are intrinsically related. "We need young voters to turn out for both campaigns." By getting out the younger vote for No on 36, Kassell says volunteers will simultaneously be getting out Kerry voters.

Kassell says the issue is about discrimination as much as it is about marriage. "It's about saying that we can treat one group of Oregonians one way, and another group another."

This is a message she feels will resonate with Kerry voters. She says No on 36 volunteers are welcome to carry materials about Kerry with them when they go door to door.

Volunteer help is "crucial" to success, Kassell says. "And it's needed right now."



PHOTO BY JIM ANDERSON

—MD Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry rallies Portlanders on Aug. 13

To make a donation or to volunteer, contact the NO ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT 36 campaign at 971-244-1399 or www.noon36.com. Tim Bias of the Rose City Softball Association, David Martinez of the LGBTQ Community Center Fund Board, Bob Mense of the Portland Gay Men's Chorus and Multnomah County Commissioner Maria Rojo de Steffey will present the fund-raiser 3 MEN & A LADY 5:30 p.m. Aug. 25 at Hobo's, 120 N.W. Third Ave. Representatives from the No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign and Basic Rights Oregon will provide information on ways people can help defeat the anti-gay ballot measure. To RSVP e-mail aladyandthreemen@yahoo.com. Haven coffee shop owner Dale Schiff will present ROCK FOR RIGHTS! 7:30 p.m. Sept. 18 at Lola's Room, 1332 W. Burnside St. Marie Fleischmann will serve as the host of this nonsmoking, 21-and-older benefit featuring performers Tamara J. Brown, Ashleigh Flynn, DK PDX, Sneakin' Out, Vivian's Keeper and Tragedy Jane. Tickets are \$10 from Ticketmaster and In Other Words. For more information call 503-236-6890.

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