

# GUEST COMMENTARY

BY ROEY THORPE

## Help wanted

Let's not miss this chance to speak out about marriage equality

**G**reetings!  
It's hard to believe that summer is almost over, and the election is now only 60 days away. It has been a very busy summer for those of us working to defeat Constitutional Amendment 36. This, as you probably know, is an attempt to ban marriage equality and put unequal treatment of gay men and lesbians into our constitution.

Basic Rights Oregon is a lead organization of the No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign coalition. We have learned over the years that the best campaigns are true coalition efforts, and No on Constitutional Amendment 36 follows that model. BRO is partnering with the American Civil Liberties Union, Planned Parenthood, Service Employees International Union/Oregon Public Employees Union, the Oregon Education Association and many other organizations, business and individuals from across the state to defeat this unnecessary and divisive amendment.

All of us at BRO have committed ourselves to winning this campaign and have made it our top priority. Make no mistake: This is the fight of our lives. None of us can simply sit by and allow unequal treatment to be written into our constitution. Whether you are a recently married couple or someone who never wants to marry, this is a battle that impacts your life, because this is about more than banning same-sex marriage. It is about sending the message that it is OK—that it is constitutional—to single out gay men and lesbians for unequal treatment. Losing this campaign would set back the cause of marriage equality for years to come.

I think it's important to understand the difference between the short-term goals of a campaign and the long-term goals of the public education we are doing on marriage and other GLBT civil rights issues. Here in Oregon, we've seen the campaigns come and go, and while it's crucial that we make them a high priority, it's equally important that we strategize for the future. Basic Rights Oregon will work hard to defeat this amendment, but we are also preparing for the 2005 legislative session and beyond. We will gain momentum through this campaign and use that velocity to be a powerhouse in Salem next year!

In the short term, we are confident that even though it will be hard work, we can win this campaign. The recent loss in Missouri was disheartening, but we know that Oregon is different. Voters here have a long history of defeating anti-gay rights ballot measures. Of a dozen states facing similar amendments this year, Oregon has the best chance to win. In fact, polls show that this election is a statistical dead heat, with neither side over 50 percent.

But in order to win, we need the help of everyone who cares about this issue! The stakes are high and the time is short. We cannot put off, even for a day, doing everything in our power to fight Constitutional Amendment 36. We must ensure that everyone in the GLBT community is registered to vote, we must talk to everyone we know about the devastating impact it will have on gays and lesbians and their families, and we must give generously of our time, money and talents to the campaign.

*Whether you are a recently married couple or someone who never wants to marry, this is a battle that impacts your life, because this is about more than banning same-sex marriage*

We need more than 5,000 volunteers across Oregon in the next two months, so please get involved today. We are all very busy this time of year, but I urge everyone who wants to keep unequal treatment of gays and lesbians out of our constitution to please pledge to volunteer at least once between now and November.

The campaign especially needs canvassers to go door to door talking to voters about this amendment. We are talking to voters at their doorsteps about the real harms that this amendment would cause. Whether you are gay or straight, young or old, experienced or new to campaigns, we need your help. We

are organizing canvasses in the Portland metro area as well as out of our regional field offices in Central Oregon, Benton/Linn counties, Lane County, Marion/Polk counties and Southern Oregon.

It's heart-breaking that we have to fight this campaign, over an issue that is so personal and so basic. Fortunately, it offers a unique opportunity for us to speak out honestly and clearly about our lives and our families and to share our stories with our fellow Oregonians. Let's not miss this chance to speak out and be heard. I urge you to go to NoOn36.com today to learn more about what the campaign is doing and how you can help in your area. ☐

ROEY THORPE is the executive director of Basic Rights Oregon.

**just out**  
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## REFLECTIONS

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• Womansource 11th annual fall gathering Sept. 7 in Ashland. Sliding fee scale, child care provided, work exchange.

• Wine and cheese reception Sept. 11 for Naomi Littlebear Morena, sponsored by Performing Artists for Nuclear Disarmament to raise funds for the travel expenses of her upcoming tour. Morena will perform along with Musica Femina, Izzetta Smith and deForrest Walker.

• Fair NW '84. Fun, food, music, info, tours, health fair, arts and crafts, sidewalk sales Sept. 15. A booth is being organized for gay/lesbian issues, fundraisers, information.

• A special all-live musical and comedy evening to benefit the Counseling Center for Sexual Minorities will be held Sept. 23 at the Embers/Avenue. The center is the parent group of the "Gay Hotline," which offers community information and medical referrals each night of the year from 7 until 11. Tickets for the two-hour show

are available at the door for \$5 and are tax-deductible.

• Truman Capote, one of the greatest of contemporary American writers, died Aug. 25 in Los Angeles at the age of 59. Although not particularly prolific, he earned the accolade of great through the depth, quality and insight of his work. He was also respected in the gay community for publicly affirming his own homosexuality without regret.

• A member of the Portland chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, William Shepherd, was recently interviewed for a public affairs program on a Seattle television station. "There was no father in Seattle willing to appear on our show," said Ellen Lockert, producer of the KING-TV program. "None of my friends knew anyone. And none of the advocacy groups could find anyone to do it, either."

• Bridgetown Realty Home of the Month: This three-bedroom on five peaceful acres is only \$59,900. Located in Clark County just 20 minutes from Portland, it has a wood stove, updated electrical, newer carpeting, fruit trees and an assumable mortgage.

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