

NORTHWEST news

Camille Reyes was fired up to help with the No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign. But she was not too keen on canvassing, even though it is a crucial need.

"I frankly hate it when people come to my door and disturb me for any reason," admits the 30-year-old lesbian.

The more she thought about it, however, the more Reyes decided the issue at hand was so important that she was willing to move past her own discomfort.

What she learned was that canvassing was far easier and less intimidating than she expected it to be—plus, it had some very positive ramifications for her social life.

Canvassers with No on 36 go out in teams of two to four to preselected neighborhoods and walk door to door talking to registered voters, handing out materials, signing up new volunteers and sometimes registering new voters.

"Our purpose is to find out how people are voting," says Shannon Callahan, statewide field director for No on 36.

She stresses that "there are people who haven't made up their minds yet. And they need to talk to us." She says once undecided voters hear more information about the amendment, they most often decide to vote no.

"People don't want innately to treat other people unequally. We all know how face-to-face conversations matter. This is how we win every campaign we've won," Callahan says, referring to successful defeats of other anti-gay measures in Oregon.

For Reyes, a recent Florida transplant, the idea of defeating anti-gay measures is a new and exciting concept.

"In Florida this wouldn't even be a conversation," she says. "It wouldn't be on anyone's radar screen as a possibility, so I feel lucky to be able to talk about it."

Reyes has gone out canvassing three times so far. She says one experience her second night out taught her the importance of talking to voters face to face. She knocked on the door of a young heterosexual family. The mother answered the door and listened to Reyes' remarks about the harmful nature of the proposed amendment. The woman affirmed her "no" vote and went to get her checkbook to make a contribution. Reyes watched the woman's 8-year-old son, who had been listening, follow his mom into the other room. When the woman returned, she handed Reyes a check from herself and a \$1 bill.

"This is from my son," the woman said.

Needless to say, Reyes was very moved. Connecting with like-minded voters is one of the rewarding parts of canvassing. Meeting new people is another. For Reyes, that meant meeting her girlfriend, Amie Whittemore—the two were

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Volunteer canvassers spread the word about the harmful nature of Ballot Measure 36 by Meg Daly



Camille Reyes met her girlfriend while canvassing door to door for the No on 36 campaign

paired up their first night of volunteering. They hit it off and have been together ever since.

Just Out joined volunteer canvassers Jodi Kansagor and Michelle House as they walked door to door in a quiet, middle-class Portland neighborhood Sept. 11.

Kansagor, a medical researcher by day and drag performer by night, says she volunteered

her time because she wanted to help her community. Single and 26 years old, she says marriage is not in her near future.

However, she says: "Whether or not I want to get married is not the issue. Everybody should have the option."

Kansagor and House visited a total of 82 houses in two hours. Many residents were not

home. Of those who came to the door, 19 said they would vote no in November.

Two individuals on House's route said they were voting yes. She politely thanked them for their time and moved on. Other houses she visited were more welcoming: One resident signed up to display a lawn sign, and another registered to vote.

Many voters seemed eager to talk about the issue.

"How could anyone ever deny [same-sex marriage]," commented Doug Fick when Kansagor came to his door. The owner of Broadway Floral, Fick said the marriages that took place March 3 convinced him to support marriage equality. He said he and his family will be adamantly voting no on Measure 36.

Dick Uhl, 76, said he, too, would be voting no. The self-proclaimed liberal said he is fed up with "right-wing conservatives' screwed-up thinking."

Kansagor and House recounted these and other exchanges as they drove back to the campaign's central meeting place for the day. There, they would enjoy a free lunch and the camaraderie of other canvassers—like Camille Reyes and her new girlfriend.

"Yes, I want to get married someday," Reyes says. "I think it's incredibly arrogant for people to try to define what marriage is, what love is. The constitution is not a place to legislate harm." □

To make a donation or to volunteer, contact the NO ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT 36 campaign at 971-244-1399 or www.no36.com. Marriage equality will be debated on the next episode of Town Hall at 6 p.m. Sept. 19 on KATU-TV.

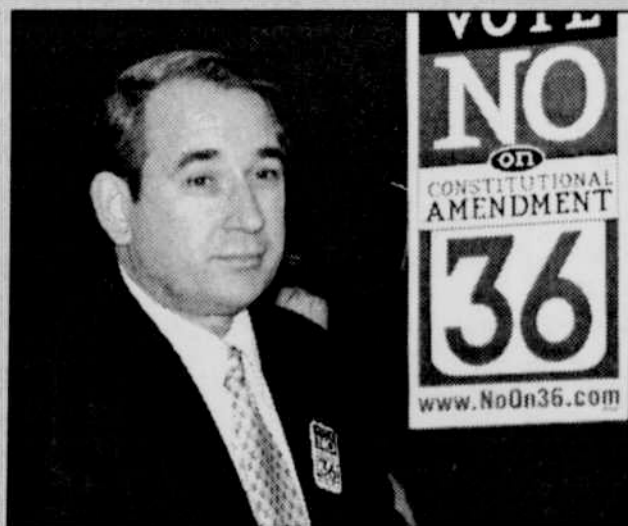
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LABOR COMMISSIONER SAYS MEASURE 36 WOULD HURT WORKING FAMILIES

Oregon Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner joined with several workers' advocates Sept. 8 to urge voters to reject Ballot Measure 36.

Speaking at a press conference for the No on 36 campaign, he said that passing the amendment "would mean that two employees who work side by side doing the same job could be treated unequally. Whether they are construction workers, firefighters or nurses, this amendment would make it OK to give one of those workers the ability to insure their spouse and their children, while the other worker's family would have to go without those benefits."

Health insurance is only one of many



Oregon Labor Commissioner Dan Gardner opposes Ballot Measure 36 because it "would mean that two employees who work side by side doing the same job could be treated unequally"

rights and responsibilities in Oregon law that would be denied to gay and lesbian couples under the amendment. Other benefits

of particular importance to working families include:

- The right to receive a deceased partner's wages.
- The right to sue for a partner's death that was a result of an unsafe workplace.
- The right to workers' compensation benefits if a partner is disabled or killed on the job.

Service Employees International Union Local 503 and Local 49 representative Maro Sevastopoulos said that SEIU had voted overwhelmingly to support the No on 36 campaign.

"Constitutional Amendment 36 goes beyond banning gay marriage," she said. "It hurts real Oregonians by putting unequal treatment of gays and lesbians into our constitution."

Other labor unions that have endorsed the No on 36 campaign include the Portland Association of Teachers, International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 5 and the Oregon Education Association.

—MD

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