

Speak out

PPA: Protecting our rights—or not?

TO THE EDITOR:

On Oct. 14, I went to my union, the Portland Police Association, to ask them to endorse the No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign.

As a police officer, I have believed in justice from the time my dad started telling me of injustices. When I was a child, blacks and women did not have an equal position in society. Income, employment, legal and social disparities for these groups were topics for discussion in our home.

Before I even hit the street, I received an anonymous letter (probably from my dad). In it were several pieces of advice. These are the words that meant the most to me: "Treat every person at every call the way you would want to be treated—the victim of a burglary, a bicycle theft, a rape. The person in handcuffs in your back seat."

Although African Americans and women have made some gains in society, civil rights still are being put to popular vote. Measure 36 is the case in point.

City Commissioner Randy Leonard, several other officers and myself pointed out at the union meeting that the partners/spouses of sexual minority officers are not entitled to state line-of-duty death benefits. These benefits (\$25,000, mortgage, education and health care benefits) are only available through marriage.

My union has an obligation to protect the rights and benefits of its members. Measure 36 eliminates these benefits for our families. But my union said they would not endorse No on 36. They "have concerns about the lack of eligibility, but..." As far as I, and other sexual minority officers are concerned, the rest of the sentence is, "but your family is disposable."

One executive board member, Officer Scott Westerman, made a motion to support our request. Of the other nine voting members present, not one seconded the motion. I guess if one of us is killed, our family shouldn't get any help with stabilization from society. Oh, that's right, we're the ones who by our sheer makeup are causing its downfall.

The "Brotherhood in Blue." The great big family of law enforcement officers, helping each other out in time of need—as long as you're straight. Personal belief systems are core to all of us, however they originate and whatever their basis. I wish we could all agree that rights and benefits (and, God forbid, even status) that government sanctions should be accessible equally, regardless of our belief systems.

The executive board members of my union told me they cannot extend beyond their personal belief systems to offer my family equality in accessing benefits to which their families are entitled. They were not willing to support me even in their professional capacity. I hope they care more about your rights as citizens in their professional capacity than they do about mine.

Many of Portland's finest are truly exceptional human beings and officers. Many recognize that unequal status and treatment is unacceptable. These officers will vote no on 36. My union representatives, save one, will not.

KATIE POTTER
Portland

Crumbling institution

TO THE EDITOR:

The proposition of constitutional amendments makes me nervous in general—"the devil is in the details"—and I see amendments as a way to occlude and obscure what is actually happening. These changes are falsely adver-

tised and sold to us in a way that "sounds good" but may very well not be—like banning gay marriage.

This whole "marriage = 1 man + 1 woman" shtick stinks. Yes, marriage is a sacred union and requires complete commitment. And yet I don't know many people my age and younger who, like me, were raised in an unbroken home.

The institution of marriage has been crumbling from within and without due to greed, ignorance and selfishness. I don't know the exact statistics, but I understand that the divorce rate has been skyrocketing for the past 60 to 70 years.

People have become so disillusioned about the commitment and security of marriage that they will even write up a prenuptial agreement that would come into effect if (when) they divorce. This degradation of intimate and committed relationships is wrong, and it's going to take a lot of time, money and community effort to slow the selfish and destructive behaviors and attitudes of people.

That is the problem that marriage faces these days, but does that get recognized? No, they say that homosexual love and commitment are somehow lesser (why else define marriage so not everyone can have it?) and thus not deserving the rite of marriage.

And yet lifelong partnerships between two women or two men have been going on unnoticed for all these years. We have the same problems with each other as heterosexual couples, but they are allowed to marry and we are not.

Not only are we denied the recognition of marriage, we're even denied permission to screw up a marriage like heterosexuals can. The reason that this matters is because "divorce" is a much stronger word than "left, broken up, etc.," and so while our pain is equal, it is seen as something not so serious. Our pain is as real as our love and needs to be recognized as such.

SARAH "STATIC" KAEDER
Portland

Join the 21st century

TO THE EDITOR:

Lonnie Roberts, county commissioner in my area, sent a Yes on 36 letter to me with articles from *The Oregonian*.

I have had four lawn signs stolen from in front of my house, my partner had a couple of guys yell "faggot" out the window as they raced by in their truck, and now a man who is supposed to represent me is voting to add bigotry to the constitution. Here is the letter that was sent to him:

How dare you, Mr. Roberts. How dare you send me your "why you are voting yes on 36" paper.

I, as a gay man who lives in East County, do not have your bigoted, narrow-minded views. Do you want to tell married couples who do not have kids that they should not be married? What about people who are divorced? Should they be allowed to marry again?

You want to change the constitution of our state to allow hatred. Why does it hurt you if I can be married to my partner?

I live in your district, and I do not follow your beliefs in any way. Does that mean I need to move? Would it be easier for you to not have to see us?

We live in the 21st century. Bring your thinking around to this time. What happened to separation of church and state?

I am voting no on 36, and it has nothing to do with getting married. It has to do with hatred allowed in the constitution.

KELLY O'SHAUGHNESSY
Portland

An open letter to Lonnie Roberts

TO THE EDITOR:

I was amused at the "why I'm voting yes on 36" letter. Perhaps you overlooked the fact that the letter was addressed to a lesbian couple who were married March 4 on the steps of the courthouse.

Again, I am unimpressed with the arguments presented in favor of Measure 36. With such empty, cowardly and false claims toward gay marriage, I can only feel pity for those who are in support of this constitutional amendment.

As a responsible taxpayer, I am embarrassed for elected officials such as yourself who work so hard at taking away my rights. I do agree that the commissioners' decision without consult of all the members was wrong in ignoring government proceedings. But we applaud those commissioners for standing up for our rights, and it was an honor to shake their hands and thank them while in line for our marriage license.

The disgraceful acts I have seen in support of anti-gay behavior has helped our decision to leave this state. We no longer want our tax dollars supporting a government that will not allow us to peacefully live our lives. Even if Measure 36 passes, be assured that the love, dignity and respect that upholds our marriage will never be taken away.

JESSICA WOULDSTRA
Gresham

An open letter to Gordon Smith

TO THE EDITOR:

When you were endorsed by several gay and lesbian organizations that I support, I was shocked. I read what they had to say and, in the end, made a decision to vote for you based on what I saw as your apparently strong personal integrity.

Just so you know the context, I am openly gay and remain an elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, even though I'm not attending weekly. Integrity means a lot to me, which explains why I will no longer support you.

I was surprised when you decided to support the Federal Marriage Amendment in the Senate; you know very well that it changed nothing but served merely as a tool to activate conservatives against gays and lesbians. Even then, I thought I understood the politics of it and was willing to continue my support.

Then I picked up the mail. There you are—the spokesman on the cover of a mailer from the hateful folks at Yes on 36, a measure that would enshrine IN OUR STATE CONSTITUTION their discrimination against gays and lesbians.

As you are aware, these public attacks and hateful, divisive statements have the most impact on our youth, causing a disproportionately high number of them to commit suicide. Imagine the irony when the bill named after your son passes at the same time you are pushing more Oregon teens toward suicide—guess bipolar is OK but gay isn't.

You should be ashamed that you chose to support this initiative—and to create an increased chance of suicides for Oregon youth. I am ashamed of you and disgusted that you continue to claim you are a friend of the gay and lesbian community even while you help kill our children.

For this act of evil I know you will be held responsible before our almighty, and hopefully before the electorate as well. I am sure you will find a way to wash yourself from the blood of our next child who commits suicide because of the environment you help create—but then your integrity was lost before your endorsement was

Mechanics that fix everything.

Including your conscience.



PDX Automotive is a certified Eco-Logical Business.

(503) 282-3315



AAA approved repair shop
Oregon certified DEO repair facility ASE Certified Mechanics

Gerard Lillie • 5934 N.E. Halsey



When an ordinary Realtor simply won't do...



3144 SE Belmont

Portland, OR 97214

office: 503-238-7617

