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NORTHWEST newsbriefs

BRO WORKING FOR BIAS BAN, CIVIL UNIONS

Measure 36 passed, but Basic Rights Oregon is capitalizing on the momentum of the campaign by encouraging interested community members to activate and start talking to their state representatives.

The unprecedented statewide organizing and cooperation provides a solid basis to get working on these issues in 2005. The first project is to picture 1,000 Oregonians with their legislative priorities in a place that these representatives have to see (see illustration below).

The beginning of the legislative session got off to a fair start Jan. 10 as Gov. Ted Kulongoski announced that enacting a statewide civil rights law banning discrimination based on sexual orientation is one of his biggest priorities for 2005.

case), it will work with these lawmakers.

A quickly penned missive from BRO communications director Rebekah Kassell reads: "Does this mean that BRO is giving up or giving in? No. We will continue to pursue legal and political options for advancing marriage equality but believe that—in the meantime—civil unions are a step in the right direction and will provide critical protections for couples and families that need them right now. BRO recognizes that civil unions are not equal to marriage and remains committed to achieving full marriage equality for all Oregonians."

Stay tuned.

GRESHAM LEGISLATOR INTRODUCES HOMOPHOBIC BILL

State Rep. John Lim, R-Gresham, an accomplished entrepreneur and leader in the Korean American community, is also an evangelical Christian who has introduced legislation that would require the state to give preference in adoption to heterosexual married couples.



COURTESY OF DAVE KOHL
The Metropolitan Community Church building in its early days at the corner of Northeast 24th and Broadway

This bill would put single people, unmarried couples and same-sex couples at a disadvantage when choosing to adopt through the state, and it signals the first attempts at erosion of adoption rights for queers.

Let Lim know what you think about this by e-mailing him at rep.johnlim@state.or.us or giving him a call at 503-986-1450. Refer to House Bill 2401.

BRO is working with the governor to enact a comprehensive law that would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, public accommodation, housing, education and public services. It would be far-reaching enough to be consistent with nondiscrimination ordinances already in place in cities and towns around the state. (For further information about what a statewide nondiscrimination bill would look like, check out the Illinois news-brief on Page 14).

To help illustrate the need for basic civil rights legislation, BRO is asking Oregonians to let the Legislature know that discrimination is real and happening in communities across the state. You can find resources for sharing these stories at www.basicrights.org.

BRO has also introduced hate crime legislation in the Oregon House that would include gender identity as a protected class. If you want to talk to your state representative about this, refer to House Bill 360.

Measure 36 has complicated the struggle for full relationship rights for same-sex couples, which continues to be a priority for BRO. As a result, BRO reports that it is changing the way it approaches the issue of marriage vs. civil unions. BRO notes that because many legislators are interested in pursuing civil unions this session (and, in fact, were ordered to do so by an April 2004 lower court decision in the Li vs. Oregon

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH SEEKS FORMER MEMBERS

Metropolitan Community Church of Portland will celebrate and recognize early members at 10 a.m. Jan. 23 in the Fireside Room at 2400 N.E. Broadway.

Everyone is invited to share in the honoring of the founding members and their contributions to MCC's rich heritage and community leadership. All former members are encouraged to attend, and visitors and newcomers of any faith are welcome.

MCC has been a major religious, social and political center of Portland's sexual minorities community. A unique congregation among Oregon's churches, ministries have reached from bars, baths and beaches to marriage, music and memorial services.

MCC Portland began as a fellowship of believers in 1974, calling itself the Portland Community Church and led by Denis Moore. Gay and lesbian Christians had been meeting and organizing in Portland since 1968, gathering irregularly at various locations around the city.

In addition to offering spiritual services, the congregation and its members have been deeply involved in furthering the cause of social justice and community service. The facility is a community meeting and organizing space and is home to Esther's Pantry, a food bank that serves clients in the HIV/AIDS community.

A complete history of the congregation is being compiled. Anyone with photographs, ephemera or stories to tell are encouraged to contact the church office at 503-281-8868.


Special thanks to historian and writer Dave Kohl for the material for this announcement.

BRISSETTE SWORN IN AS LINCOLN CITY'S FIRST OUT GAY OFFICIAL

When he's not running his 15,000-square-foot antique store (paradoxically called "The Little Antique Mall"), Rick Brissette is working

Dear Wespke/Krieger and Sen. Kruse

This is who I am:



I am committed to equal rights for all Oregonians. I expect my representative to support equal support, rights, and responsibility for all constituents without regard to their personal identity such as sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or gender identity.

My priorities for this legislative session are:

1. Omnibus nondiscrimination legislation
2. Add gender identity to Oregon's bias criminal laws
3. Create relationship rights in Oregon for same-sex couples

These priorities are important to me because: It is right! And because my son and his partner should be safe and expect equal rights in Oregon.

Your Constituent,

John Van Duser
John Van Duser

Submission to the "Pictures and Priorities" campaign to raise lawmakers' awareness of citizen issues

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Thanks Christine!

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