

Your Friendly Neighborhood ISP

SpiritOne
INTERNET SERVICES

www.SpiritOne.com

**Dial-Up Internet
High-Speed DSL
and
Web Hosting**



Serving Greater Oregon and SW Washington

**In the last five years,
Portland area gay/bi men have
been hit hard by HIV & STDs.**

Help Protect Yourself from HIV & STDs by:

- Having better sex with fewer people
- Using a condom when you fuck or get fucked
- Not fucking when you are high or drunk
- **Getting tested for HIV & STDs every 3 months**



justout

offer regular FREE syphilis, HIV, &/or Hep2 testing:

• **1st Thurs, CC Slaughters** 7-11:30pm

• **2nd Thurs, D. H. S. Testing by Multnomah County Health Dept.**

• **2nd Fri, Scandals** 7-11:30pm

• **3rd Thurs, D. H. S. Testing by Multnomah County Health Dept.**

• **4th Sat, Eagle** 10am-4pm

You can also get more complete testing from your doctor or the Multnomah County STD Clinic: 503-988-3700. Bar testing offered Feb - Jun 2005. For more info about bar testing:

info@qland.org **503-223-8822 X3** www.qland.org

NORTHWESTnews

FRIENDS OF DOROTHY No More

Comparing anti-marriage ban campaigns in Oregon and Kansas

by Jaymee R. Cuti

Queer Oregonians can feel a little closer to their brothers and sisters in Kansas who now share a similar same-sex marriage ban in their state's constitution.

Kansas voters overwhelmingly passed the amendment, which, in its wording, takes the extra step of negating domestic partnerships and the possibility for civil unions in the future.

Like in Oregon, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force provided support to Kansas' queer rights group, Equality Kansas, though officials say their hope of defeating the measure in Kansas was bleak.

"The initial polling done in Kansas showed the measure was going to pass with 80 percent, so we never held out a strong hope," says Thalia Zepatos, deputy director of organizing and training for NGLTF.

Unofficial counts from April 5 indicate 70 percent of Kansans passed the amendment with nearly 415,000 votes.

NGLTF entered Kansas with a bigger job of campaign organizing than it found in Oregon, because Oregon was prepared.

"They often go into states where there's absolutely no infrastructure," says Rebekah Kassell, communications director for Basic Rights Oregon.

BRO's director, Roey Thorpe, was an executive member of the local No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign.

According to Kassell, NGLTF did not have a strong hand in formulating the local campaign.

"The campaign was run locally. All the campaign strategy, field plans and fund-raising plans were developed in state," she says, by groups including BRO, the American Civil Liberties Union and Planned Parenthood.

That doesn't mean Oregon didn't need outside help.

"Never before in the history of the task force had there been that level of financial and staff support to a campaign," says Kassell. "Primarily, what they did was give us a lot of money and provided us with staff support to help fill out our field team."

NGLTF officials say they had good reason to put its eggs in Oregon's basket.

"We felt that Oregon, out of any state, had the best chance of defeating the measure. The strength of Basic Rights Oregon and a history of organizing made Oregon more prepared to meet and discuss this topic," Zepatos says.

NGLTF contributions in Oregon were about \$900,000, more than a third of the campaign's total budget. It also lent Oregon its entire organizing and training team of 12.

"They had tools for training. They're accustomed to setting up shop and the logistics of field work or how to run a phone bank," says Kassell.

Support to the Kansas campaign consisted of two staff members and \$10,000 for the general campaign, along with the occasional speaker-phone strategy session.

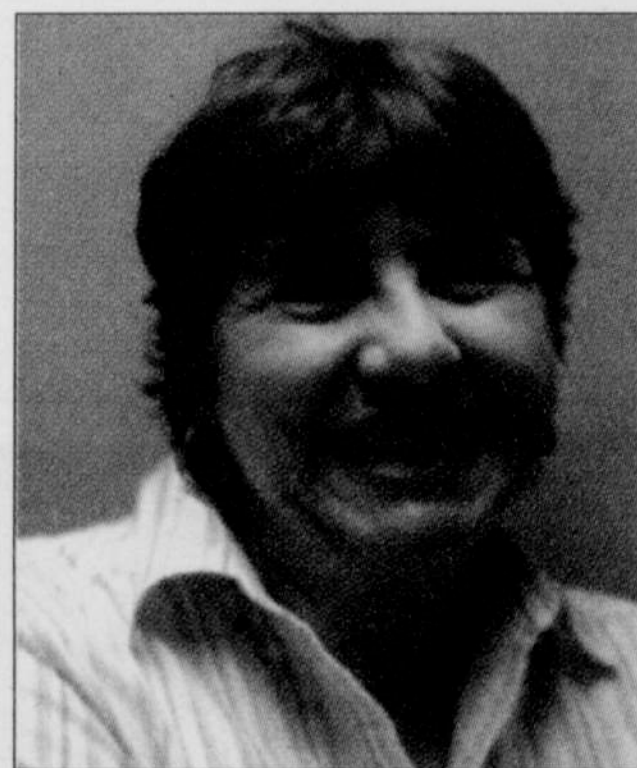
According to Zepatos, NGLTF support will continue in Kansas and other states that failed to defeat marriage bans.

"We will continue talking with activists in Kansas to help them make the most of the contacts they built during the campaign," says Zepatos. "Each political campaign forces us to

do about five years of community organizing in a very condensed period of time. Equality Kansas will come out if this with many new allies, a much stronger base of support and the motivation to continue organizing."

Though campaign messages differed from state to state, with Kansas having a strong faith leadership presence, Zepatos believes the campaigns failed for the same reason. "Our main enemy is the short amount of time that we have to present a lot of new information to the voters," she says.

NGLTF has found that engaging individual voters in discussions on the phone or at the doorstep is most effective in changing the minds of those who haven't previously considered marriage equality. But reaching those people is incredibly time-consuming and labor-intensive.



Thalia Zepatos works as deputy director of organizing and training for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

"What we're seeing everywhere in the country is the voters really haven't considered the issue of same-sex marriage. While everyone is familiar to a certain extent to what marriage means, they're not familiar with the specific legal rights associated with marriage," Zepatos says. "What we saw both in Kansas and Oregon was we simply did not have enough time to make our case to the voters."

Local critics expressed concern about the amount of control the national organization had on No on 36. That tension tends to arise in other cities as well.

"There's always a dynamic between national organizations and statewide groups. It's easy for people in the national organization to see trends that happen in other states and take the lessons learned so other states can start a little further on the learning curve. Activists feel, justifiably, that their state is unique and want to create a campaign plan that speaks to the unique nature of their state and voters," says Zepatos.

In Oregon, NGLTF's reinforcement came at local organizers' request.

Zepatos adds, "I think our help was very much welcomed in Oregon, and Kansas would have liked to have much more support." □

Staff Writer JAYMEE R. CUTI can be reached at jaymee@justout.com.