

Can I get a witness?

Oregon Legislature hears testimony on Senate Bill 1000

Hearings for Senate Bill 1000 convened May 4 in Salem. This bill, if passed, will provide civil unions for same-sex couples in Oregon and put into place protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Preceded by a rally on the Capitol steps led by the ever-dynamic Roey Thorpe of Basic Rights Oregon, a contingent of supporters gave voice to the call for passage of progressive legislation.

Portland City Commissioner Sam Adams was one of many placing himself in the bright light of personal scrutiny as he addressed the hearing. Here is the text of his remarks:

"Thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify before you this evening. My comments will be brief, as I understand you have many people hoping to have your ear.

"My name is Sam Adams. I grew up in Newport and Eugene, Oregon. I am a resident of North Portland. As the first openly gay member of the Portland City Council, I find myself in the unique position of being both publicly in charge and privately restricted. I will tell you what I mean.

"As a member of the City Council, I am charged to make decisions that affect over 100,000 families in Portland. But I cannot make decisions with a family of my own making.

"I am entrusted to spend \$1.9 billion wisely, but I am not trusted to manage the benefits of a partner who has passed on.

"I make multimillion-dollar decisions about the health care of 5,400 city employees, but I'm hindered in making lifesaving medical decisions for a life partner.

"I will help build thousands of homes for families who need it, but I can be denied a hotel room in my hometown of Newport. I cannot see the logic in these contradictions. I hope the Legislature cannot as well.

"Portland has had a civil rights ordinance, much like the non-discrimination provision of the bill before you for 13 years. It has worked. Senate Bill 1000 asks you to extend these protections, as Portland cannot protect all Oregonians from being denied rights because of their sexual orientation. With two-thirds of Oregon voters supporting civil unions and 80 percent of Oregonians supporting a ban on discrimination, you have the support of our state behind you. I know you have my support.

"Thank you for your leadership, your advocacy and your belief in the rights of every Oregonian to a fair and prosperous life. Good evening."

Just Out is not making candidate endorsements in any of the upcoming school board elections. We encourage you to study the candidates in your district closely and, if possible, attend a neighbor-

hood forum where you can meet and question those running for office. People elected to school boards have enormous responsibilities, and they make decisions that ultimately affect all of us. In this issue we introduce you to Dan Ryan, an openly gay man running for Zone 4 of the Portland Public Schools board. He was endorsed in his race May 2 by *The Oregonian*.

The cover of this issue of *Just Out* reflects on "focus." As individuals and as organizations, we are all eventually faced with a need to stop, shake it off and refocus. Refocus our energies, our commitment and our desire to live and work to our fullest potential.

For more than a year now, the focus of our community has been on securing equal rights via the legalization of same-sex marriage. During this year of intense work, we have lost, or perhaps shifted, focus from other goals and initiatives. It is now time to broaden our focus and look more clearly at where we find ourselves.


Our cover story focuses on Love Makes a Family and community perceptions of the effectiveness of this organization. Bonnie Tinker's group is not alone in its lack of focus and viability. The Portland Gay Men's Chorus is struggling with leadership issues and changes in staffing and is wisely turning to outside assistance as it restructures and refocuses the organization. Members of the Lesbian Community Project continue to struggle to find their way in a community that's seemingly gone ahead without them.

As a photographer, albeit amateur, I'm aware of the consequences of being out of focus. Vision, viewpoint and ability to see clearly become blurry. No action, however, yields more power than that of refusal to accept criticism, accept change and take steps that lead you back to a clear vision of the path you should be on.

Far too frequently, my e-mail brings a notice from the governor's office. The heading is always the same: "A Statement by Governor Ted Kulongoski on Death of Oregon Soldier." The first line always reads: "Governor Theodore R. Kulongoski asked that all flags at public institutions be flown at half-staff in memory and honor of (insert most recent victim's name here)."

After seeing far too many of these e-mails, I suggest that we now simply leave the flags down continuously until this war is over and this meaningless loss of life ends. This is the most fitting tribute at this time.

This is my first public anti-war statement. It's time that I, too, adjust my focus.

I can see clearly now. 

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REFLECTIONS

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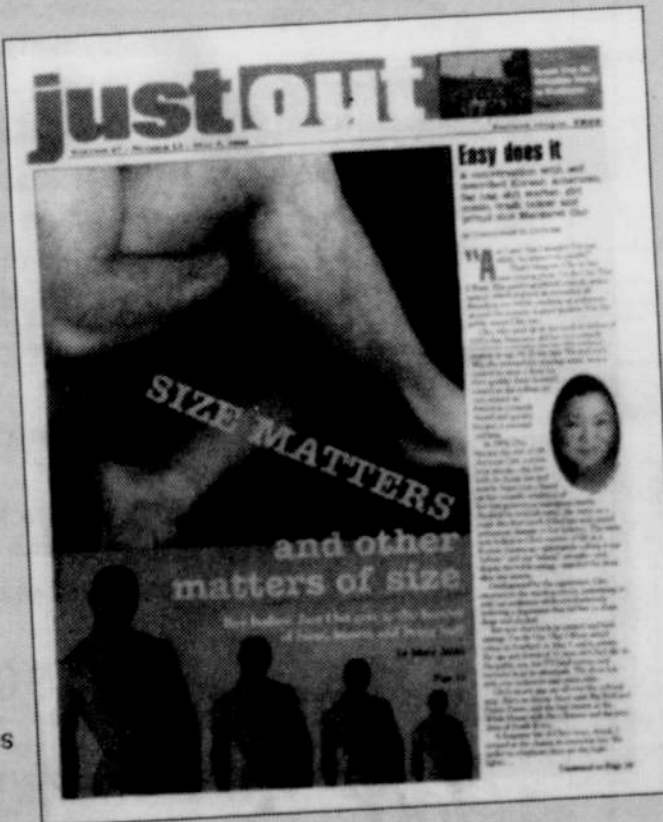
- The Lesbian Community Project has been without a full-time staff organizer since Deke Law departed last fall. Longtime community activist Kristan Aspen just completed a stint as interim staff organizer for the 13-year-old organization. She has been retained on a contract basis until fall.

- After a six-year stint on Equity Foundation's board of directors, Matthew Nelson was hired as the organization's executive director in April.

- The April 27 *Des Moines Register* reports that Seattle-based sex columnist Dan Savage, who allegedly cast a vote earlier this year in the Iowa presidential caucuses, has been charged with felony voter fraud.

- In April, Mississippi became the second state in 2000 to pass legislation banning gay and lesbian couples from adopting. Utah passed a similar law earlier this year. Previously, Florida had been the only state to forbid adoptions by gay and lesbian couples.

- Gov. Howard Dean signed a bill into law April 26 that makes Vermont the first state to give same-sex couples the rights



and benefits of marriage. He signed the bill privately, because he did not want the ceremony to be a triumphal party for supporters of the law. Instead, he said, it was time for the state to begin healing.

- Empress XXXVIII Misha Rockafeller is one of the hosts of Drag WhipCream 2000 on May 7 at the Brig.

- Encore Theater, a group of senior citizens in Eugene, talks to youth about their life experiences, including the perspective of a lesbian. Because of the inclusion of a lesbian viewpoint, they have been targeted by the Oregon Citizens Alliance.

- The Portland Bisexual Alliance plays host to Oregon Bi Conference 2000 with co-sponsor Queers and Allies, a student group at Portland State University, May 13. Oregon now has six bi-specific organizations, and additional groups are beginning to emerge.

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