

A House divided

Speaker Karen Minnis is serving herself, not her state

It's a warm and sunny morning, the first in some time. As I drive down Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, I notice Latinas ministering to the day workers who cluster on the corners and streets of our inner Northeast neighborhood, waiting and hoping for employment opportunities. The women stand out; they're well-dressed, overdressed, one in a long velvet skirt, holding a Bible flat and outright in her open palm. The men appear respectful yet disinterested at the same time. They can listen, they can walk away, they can share their own views. These men and women, in this street forum, they are on equal ground.

Drive 45 miles south to Salem and you'll find another woman involved in her own unique form of personal political ministry. This one, however, is an elected official, and her forum is the Oregon House, where she is attempting to restrict the equality of her constituency. Through manipulation and abuse of authority, Speaker Karen Minnis, R-Wood Village, has vowed that Senate Bill 1000 will not come to a vote in her chamber this session. Openly vowing to stall the bill, she has gone to the extreme measure of closing down the House for two three-day periods, allowing the work of our paid elected officials to go undone.

With many detractors questioning her motives and abilities, including those on the political encyclopedia Web site dKosopedia.com, where Minnis is reported to be "viewed by many as being emotionally unstable," the speaker absolutely has to be brought back under control. She and her staff must clearly receive the message that her job is to serve at the will of the people. And it is the will of the people of Oregon that this bill be brought before the House. You must call her office, 503-986-1200, where a staffer will acknowledge that he or she appreciates your call. And then you call again. The 2005 legislative session is winding to a close; we must not allow these stalling tactics to be successful.

Thomas Bruner, executive director of Cascade AIDS Project, will not be a candidate for the Multnomah County Commission seat held by Serena Cruz. In an e-mail sent July 8 to Cruz, and copied to friends and supporters, Bruner acknowledged that he would indeed be a great candidate for the seat, a candidate who would run a top-notch campaign and do a bang-up job if elected. But, he continued, "I don't want to run for office for the next 18 months of my life." With the closing thought that perhaps one day he'll consider a run at an elected position, Bruner admits that, for now, "I'll leave that to folks with more fire in their belly for electoral politics."

Cruz faces term limits for her position and is not eligible to run again. She previously announced that she will not challenge Multno-


mah County Chair Diane Linn for that position.

Is there another person in the sexual minorities community who might step up and run for this office or, for that matter, any other? With the 2006 midterm election on the horizon, who can we groom and support for elective office, be it a county, city or statewide position? Who does have the "fire in their belly"? Which progressive candidate will step up to replace Karen Minnis and those like her who serve themselves and not the state and citizens they represent? In our nonsmoking backroom conversations, whom should we be talking about? Toss us some names. Maybe yours?

In his previously mentioned capacity as Cascade AIDS Project executive director, Thomas Bruner comes across my desk yet again, this time in the form of a request that *Just Out* deny placement of an advertisement from an adult store. The ad in question references the store's selection of "bareback" videos. Bruner is passionate and respected in his role as educator and proponent of safe-sex techniques for men who have sex with men. I know that he knows of what he speaks, and I know that his concern is genuine. And if Bruner were elected to the Multnomah County Commission, he'd have even further access to the health department and all of its alarming statistics showing the rise of sexually transmitted diseases. Much of the spread of these diseases can be traced back to people engaging in unprotected sex.

This request, however, leaves me to grapple with the issue of morality vs. legality and the censorship of one business not in sync with the message of another. As a publisher and proponent of free speech, I feel compelled to deny Bruner his request and, as such, let these two fight it out themselves. Let CAP take its message directly to the adult stores as it works to continue to spread safe-sex techniques.

The movies, as viewed by current standards, might be considered "wrong," but they are not illegal. Also, many of these videos, filmed prior to the AIDS epidemic, are viewed as classics, a fact that sets forth a different standard for evaluation. While I hold the right to set standards and guidelines for what I will accept for sexually explicit advertising, I am also very aware of the burden of censorship and projection of differing values onto others. While I would not accept an ad showing the actual act of bareback sex, I can't deny the mere acknowledgment that bareback videos exist and are available. Hypocritical of me? Nope, merely drawing a line and standing firm.

The *Just Out* office will be closed the week of July 18. We'll return your phone calls and e-mails on or around July 25, and we'll see you next in print Aug. 5. 

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REFLECTIONS

• The bar association in Macedonia (formerly part of Yugoslavia) voted June 7 to ban homosexuals and alcoholics from becoming lawyers, reported the newspaper *Dnevnik*. It said the public doesn't trust them.

• About 200 gay and lesbian organizations received donations totaling more than \$100,000 from the Pride Network, a long-distance telephone service provider serving the gay and lesbian community.

• Portland lesbian activist Donna Red Wing has been appointed acting executive director of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. She has been GLAAD's national field director since October 1993. Red Wing previously was executive director of the Lesbian Community Project.

• Citing the lack of inclusiveness on a transgender health panel at the National Lesbian and Gay Health Conference, activists seized control of the podium and opened participation to all transsexuals and transgender people who wished to join them, according to a press release. Spearheading the takeover were Portlanders Rachel Koteles and Margaret Deirdre O'Hartigan.



• Right to Privacy will hold its fourth annual Garden Party on July 30. The event will be held in Sherwood and will feature guest speakers Portland Mayor Vera Katz, U.S. Rep. Elizabeth Furse and state Reps. Gail Shibley and Chuck Carpenter.

• An estimated 175 people attended Phoenix Rising Foundation's inaugural Lesbian and Gay Pride Dinner on June 15 at the Portland Hilton. The event celebrated the life of Jack Abele, who helped found Phoenix Rising, one of the few counseling centers nationwide specifically designed to serve the needs of sexual minorities. Abele died in January.

• Bonnie Tinker, executive director of the Portland-based Love Makes a Family, says her group is a local affiliate of Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE), an international club for children of lesbians and gay men.

• Don't miss Girls' Nite Out at the East Avenue Tavern. Hosted by DJ Mel, tonight's show features Laura Kemp, Kaia Wilson, Lisa Enterline (with Elizabeth Deal) and Jackie Randall.

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