

Now what?

Karen Minnis killed civil unions. Could a ballot measure campaign resuscitate them?

The 2005 Oregon state legislative session has come to a close and was, by all accounts, very lackluster. Accomplishments include potentially forcing myself and hordes of my fellow allergy sufferers across the river to buy Claratin and the naming of a state pollen or some such thing. One positive note: The Senate passed Senate Bill 1000. Less positive: Karen Minnis killed it in the House. There will be no civil unions, no statewide anti-discrimination laws, no reciprocal rights in Oregon for the foreseeable future.

What's next? This is the question on everyone's mind. In many conversations the topic is now turning toward the idea of putting forth our own ballot measure, brought before the voters to seek approval for civil unions. But there's much to be considered and evaluated before any decision can be made regarding this. The process of sponsoring an initiative petition, not unlike the very marriage rights that many seek, is not to be entered into lightly.

Basic Rights Oregon will be taking the lead role in planning and setting strategy for the future. It has to evaluate proper timing, funding, legal challenges, volunteer capability, community commitment and strength of opposition along with myriad other details.

The first opportunity to place a ballot measure before voters would be the general election in November 2006. The process for such is very structured. First you have a sponsoring organization, individuals or committee. A great deal of legal assistance is required. Every word, every period, every dot of initiative wording is scrutinized. Everything is subject to challenge. Sponsors submit their proposed ballot measure to the secretary of state's office, where it meets its first challenge of legality. Assuming the state approves the ballot measure, a title is then assigned. Next comes a period during which legal challenges to the ballot measure are brought forth. Even the sponsors might challenge the title of the measure. The entire process is fraught with legal challenges.

Once a measure is past all the challenges and gets a "good to go" from the secretary of state's office, the signature gathering begins. Note that ballot measures fall into two categories, statutory and constitutional. If a measure falls into the statutory category, 75,630 valid signatures of registered voters have to be turned in by July 7, 2006. If a ballot measure is constitutional in nature, as would be one involving civil unions, the required number of signatures is 100,840. Keep in mind that all signatures are verified by the state and that in order to maintain the proper number of valid signatures, you need to gather about 50 percent more than the required amount. That translates to a lot of signatures.


Then there's the question of signature gatherers. Would they be volunteer or paid? Paid circulators are legal in Oregon—as long as they are

not paid by the number of signatures gathered. Ideally, an army of volunteer gatherers would rise up across the state. Are we really ready to take our places outside Wal-Mart? At 50 signatures apiece, it would take more than 3,000 people to gather the minimum amount needed. Do we have a network of 3,000 committed volunteers?

Is 2006, a midterm election, the best time to be presenting Oregon voters with a civil unions bill? For that matter, would we be proposing civil unions, or civil unions tied in with anti-discrimination laws? Would we use reciprocal rights wording, or would we focus only on matters affecting same-sex couples? In 2006, Republicans in Oregon will be swarming to the polls (mailboxes) to claim a seemingly within-grasp gubernatorial victory. Would this be the best time to have a civil unions bill before voters? If we wait until the 2008 presidential election, there's the possibility of a stronger supportive presence as liberal and moderate voters look to the opportunity to reclaim the White House from Republican control. All these factors play into consideration.

Financial support from outside the state must be a consideration of any decision regarding a ballot measure. In 2004, the No on 36 campaign was the recipient of much financial support from national sources, as Oregon was deemed likely to claim victory in our ballot measure battle. In 2006 these funds will likely not be available, as many other states, including California, face similar battles. We've had our moment in the spotlight. Without outside funding, can the progressive community in Oregon successfully mount and succeed at a ballot measure? Would we be better served by focusing our efforts on influencing state elections in 2006, thus creating potentially more successful opportunity for the 2007 Legislature to succeed at what they failed in 2005?

There's a lot to consider before we take any action. As individuals, you have a role to play in the decision-making. Are you ready to commit months of your life to gathering signatures? Can you step up with financial support? Are you ready to come out to all your neighbors and co-workers? Are you ready to take your place in the fight for civil rights? Have your answers ready; your chance to speak will be coming up soon.

Kudos to all the *Just Out* readers at the Oregon State Building in Portland who rallied together when this publication was removed from it. Your umbrage and actions were successful, and we have been invited to return, fire hazard that we are. It was very good to have your help and support in fighting this battle. The manner in which you rose up to express your displeasure is heartening and deeply appreciated. Thank you. 

FEATURE

22 TRUE BREW

Just Out spills the beans on Portland's queer-owned java joints

NEWS

8-15 NORTHWEST

SB 1000 hits the end of the line thanks to House Speaker Karen Minnis; Cascade AIDS Project executive director Thomas Bruner resigns; old dykes to gather in Vancouver, British Columbia; queer vendors find a home at Portland Saturday Market; Sam Adams named city arts liaison

16-19 NATIONAL

Bush names Judge John G. Roberts Jr. as Supreme Court candidate; hoopla over Gay.com billboard; Floridian gays' house and Brownsville, Texas, nightclub torched in hate crimes; Californians regaled with another homophobic ballot initiative; Million Man March reprise won't talk to gay groups

20-21 WORLD

Iran executes gay teens; anti-gays trash Latvia's first Pride parade

ARTS AND CULTURE

34-37 FILM

New DVDs celebrate the Divine Miss M; Wonder Woman comes to the rescue in *The Dukes of Hazzard* and *Sky High*

39 THEATER

Musical revue revives legendary composer Irving Berlin

40-41 DIVERSIONS

St. Johns Window Project; Ladies on the Links Golf Tournament; NW Professional Dance Project; Girls on Gay; Lesbian Community Project Softball Tournament; Darren Stein

42-43 CULTURE

Leather community comes together for a weeklong festival of party, charity and play

COLUMNS

33 MS. BEHAVIOR

Life's a beach

38 EPIQUEERIAN

Out on the street

45 JIM'S CLOSET

Red scare

PUBLISHER & MANAGING EDITOR

Marty Davis

NEWS EDITOR

Sarah Dougher

ARTS AND CULTURE EDITOR

Jim Radosta

STAFF WRITER

Jaymee R. Cuti

ART DIRECTOR

Bonnie Barrett

AD PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

Ramey Holsman

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Larry Lewis

ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES

Kari Tate, Cshea Walker

CONTRIBUTORS

Yvonne P. Behrens, Stephen Blair, Meryl Cohn, Patricia L. MacAodha, Andy Mangels, Christopher McQuain, Gary Morris, Jenny Nguyen, Courtney Perkins, Rebecca Ragain, Bob Roehr, Floyd Sklaver, Glenn Scofield Williams, Rex Wockner

DISTRIBUTION

Allison Benn, Lisa Benson, Pat Kilmer-Cramer, Shug Mauldin, Crash Schwartz

REFLECTIONS

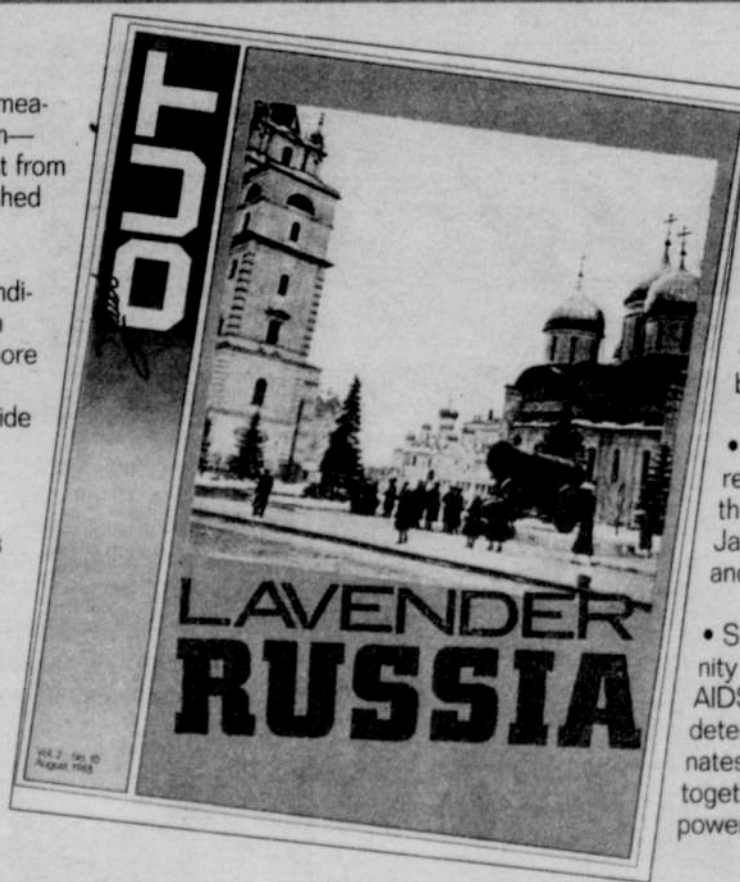
20 years ago in *Just Out*... Vol. 2 No. 10, August 1985

- Gay people will see few benefits from the tax reform measures now being promoted by the Reagan administration—unless they're rich. High-income people will benefit most from the Reagan plan because the top tax rate has been slashed to 35 percent from the current 50 percent.

- Previous research in the gay/lesbian community has indicated a preference for retirement housing and long-term care facilities that are homosexually oriented. To elicit more detailed and accurate information concerning interest in such facilities for older lesbians and gay men, a nationwide survey is being conducted.

- The American Bar Association's House of Delegates rejected, by nine votes, a proposal to use the resources of the lawyers group to lobby at federal, state and local levels for civil rights for gays and lesbians.

- Recently, Deputy Chief Tom Potter of the Portland Police Bureau volunteered to be police liaison to the gay community. The position was created because concerned individuals contacted the department after a scheduling mistake left the Lesbian and Gay Pride parade without a police escort.



- Cascade AIDS Project has received \$1,880 from the Venereal Disease Action Council to begin distributing condoms in Portland's gay bars and baths and initiate a Condom Campaign that will be ongoing and self-sustaining. Condom use is an effective way to help prevent the transmission of disease, including the HTLV-III virus, the presumed cause of AIDS.

- Portland's newest women's dance band, AH'Z, will be playing at the Primary Domain.

- Buried Personalities* is an evening of one-act plays recently presented at Echo Theater by a new women's theater group called X/Wives, featuring Sarazan Torelle James, Kelley Edwards, Carol Steinel, Tilly Christensen and Kathy Duff.

- Since the onset of AIDS, our development as a community has come to a halt. Like the immune system of the AIDS victim, our community's development backslides and deteriorates for a while, then it reaches a plateau and stagnates. And like AIDS researchers, little groups band together to compete with each other for the money and the power, playing one against the other.

Just Out is published on the first and third Friday of each month. Copyright © 2005 by *Just Out*. No part of *Just Out* may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher. **Editorial guidelines:** Letters to the editor should be limited to 500 words. Announcements regarding life transitions (births, deaths, unions, etc.) should be limited to 200 words; photos are welcome. **Deadline for submissions** to the editorial department and for the Calendar is the Thursday 15 days before the next publication date. *Just Out* reserves the right to edit for grammar, punctuation, style, liability concerns and length. Views expressed in letters to the editor, columns and features are not necessarily those of the publisher. **Advertising policy:** The display advertising deadline is the Monday 12 days before the next publication date. **Classified ads** must be received at the *Just Out* office by 5 p.m. on the Sunday five days before the next publication date. Classifieds may be placed via www.justout.com, by mail or in person at our office. *Just Out* reserves the right to reject or edit any advertisement. Compensation for errors in, or cancellation of, advertising will be made with credit toward future advertising. Advertising rates available upon request. **Distribution policy:** *Just Out* is available free of charge. *Just Out* is delivered only to authorized distributors. No person may, without prior written permission, take more than one copy. Any person who takes more than one copy may be held liable for theft, including but not limited to civil damages and/or criminal prosecution. **Subscriptions** are \$22.50 for 12 issues. First Class (in an envelope) is \$40 for 12 issues. **Contact** *Just Out* at P.O. Box 14400, Portland, OR 97293-0400; 503-236-1252, advertising 503-236-1253, fax 503-236-1257; e-mail justout@justout.com. Visit us on the web at www.justout.com.