

## Speak Out

### Preserving Social Security

TO THE EDITOR:

As we approach the 70th anniversary of Social Security, gays and lesbians should understand that, just like the rest of Americans, we have a huge stake in a reasonable approach to Social Security. President Bush's so-called privatization plan is a serious attack on Social Security and our future.

In the first place, Social Security needs more income in order to be solvent into the foreseeable future. Clearly, it does not need less income. Bush's Social Security privatization plan is fiscally irresponsible because it would deprive Social Security of income and would pass a substantial burden on to future generations while ignoring solutions that are both reasonable and fiscally responsible.

First and foremost, Congress should expand tax exemptions for citizen contributions to existing private savings plans, including private IRAs and 401(k) plans, in order to implement the stated purpose for Bush's proposal: namely, to encourage greater savings by the population. Secondly, Congress can add to Social Security's solvency by immediately ending all caps on Federal Insurance Contributions Act contributions. Thirdly, Congress could consider using special debt instruments on borrowings from Social Security that carry an interest rate equivalent to any reasonably foreseeable return on the proposed private accounts.

Social Security is and has been an insurance plan, not an investment plan. The insurance aspect of Social Security would be put at an unnecessary risk in the marketplace if any part of

it were to be diverted from the insurance concept to a private investment scheme. Privatization is unnecessary in view of the availability of existing private plans (IRAs and 401(k)s), that Congress could easily enhance at substantially lower cost. These are the responsible things to do.

The proposed plan is irresponsible because it envisions cuts in Social Security benefits. These would be disastrous—and unfair—for most Social Security recipients. The proposed plan is also irresponsible because it would require a massive increase in the national debt—to the tune of trillions of dollars—to finance the transition to private accounts. This is fiscally irresponsible, especially as it increases the interest/tax burden on our children and grandchildren.

Bush's "progressive price indexing" proposal, which would redistribute Social Security contributions by any people earning more than \$20,000 a year to ensure 100 percent guaranteed benefit levels for those earning less than \$20,000 a year, is akin to transforming Social Security from a guaranteed earned insurance system to that of a welfare system.

Log Cabin Republicans, which I used to be involved with, endorse Bush's ridiculous plan despite its irresponsibility. Log Cabin and other Republicans should realize that the Bush plan has already contributed to a lack of trust in government among Americans of all political persuasions. It is up to us to take leadership in convincing our representatives to exercise strong leadership in the interests of fiscal responsibility restoration of our trust in our government.

LEE COLEMAN  
Aloha

### Human rights is a no-brainer

TO THE EDITOR:

I never intended nor wanted to be active in politics. In fact, it leaves a bad taste in my mouth.

I want to live a simple life. I want to enjoy my life with my domestic partner of 13 years, our three grown daughters and our four grandchildren.

I am sick and tired of being treated like I am a second-class citizen in my own country and state because of the "bully mentality" of people like Karen Minnis and religious nutcases who cannot get it through their thick heads that "freedom and justice for all" includes me and my family, too.

I understand that House Bill 3508 picks up the pieces of Rep. Minnis' reprehensible actions with respect to Senate Bill 1000. Not only should it be voted on, but anything that grants equal rights and protections to my family just as it does to yours should pass. The matter of human rights is a no-brainer.

MIKE MARTINEZ  
Portland

### An open letter to Karen Minnis

TO THE EDITOR:

I'm writing to ask you to bring Senate Bill 1000 to the floor for a vote before the current session ends. I know doing so will be risky for you, but I sincerely believe the benefits for you actually outweigh the risks, especially in the long term.

Allowing the vote will be unpopular with many in your traditional base of support, but times are changing, and history will remember you kindly if you allow the vote. It's inevitable.

People who have tasted freedom once will agitate until they get it permanently. And with the passing of time, people in Oregon and the rest of the nation are realizing more and more the LGBT community needs and deserves the same recognition and protection, rights and responsibilities as the rest of society.

My partner is not a U.S. citizen and, due to his comparative lack of wealth and ties to his homeland, is not allowed to come the United States, not even for a visit. Do you have any idea what it's like to be half of a binational couple who are forbidden by law to live their lives together here in America? My personal objectives thus go slightly beyond the matter of civil unions in Oregon, but I have to start somewhere, and right now no one is more perfectly situated to advance (or hinder) my progress than you.

CHARLES POWNE  
Portland

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## transitions

### Joan Norman, 1933-2005

Legendary activist Joan Norman was killed July 23 in a head-on car collision on Highway 199 near the California border. She was 72.

Norman was dearly loved and revered by many in the community of southern Oregon; the news of her passing sent shock waves through Oregon and far beyond. Forest activists, friends and family held a solidarity forest defense action in her honor Aug. 2.

"I don't know what else to do to stop the log trucks, so I am sitting down again," Norman said during her second arrest March 14 in opposition to the "Biscuit Fire Recovery Project." Refusing compromise or bail payment, she voluntarily spent several weeks in jail in protest of illegal logging. While inside, she worked tirelessly to empower other inmates by offering legal resources and personal support. Norman was arrested more than 100 times in her life standing up for civil, social and environmental causes and never had a lawyer until the Biscuit campaign. She will be dearly missed, as will her ever-present enthusiasm and her no-nonsense, powerful style.

Norman had a contagious resolve and humble nobility that challenged those around her to take a stand for what they hold most dear, becoming a national icon of the forest defense movement. She personified the dignified heroism of those who act selflessly in defense of the fundamental values most Americans share but rarely act on.

Her daughter, Sue Norman Jones, said, "Joan would like to be remembered actively, not passively."

Norman is survived by her children, Susan, Timothy, Terry and Annie; friend and companion, Bob Youdan; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild; and extended environmental activist family.

An interactive memorial was held July 31 at Forks State Park. Friends brought food, pictures,



"I would rather go out in a blaze, defending the world I love," said Joan Norman, whose remarkable life was remembered by her community July 31. She is shown here being arrested for protesting logging at the Biscuit Fire site.

songs and writings and were invited to participate in celebrating Norman's remarkable life and legacy.

Donations in her memory can be made to the Joan Norman Memorial Fund at Home Valley Bank in Cave Junction.