

by Marty Davis

Northern Exposure

Washington deserves credit for progressive civil rights and health policies

It's official. The score now stands at Washington 2, Oregon 0. With the recent passage of nondiscrimination legislation in Washington, combined with earlier enactment of one of the nation's strictest anti-smoking polices, our neighbor to the north has soared ahead of Oregon in setting the benchmark for progressive civil rights and health policies.

I was able to appreciate both happenings on a visit to Vancouver's Northbank Tavern for a celebration Jan. 27, when the state Senate set into motion actions making it illegal to discriminate against gays and lesbians in areas of jobs, housing and public accommodations. Walking into the Northbank, I was greeted by a strong smell of deep fat fryer grease. I quickly realized that this was one of the few times I'd ever walked into a bar and smelled anything besides decades-old cigarette smoke. And with this knowledge comes a sense of opportunity.

The Northbank promotes itself as a gay bar. It's located smack dab in downtown Vancouver, mere miles from the Portland metro area. Portlanders are often heard calling and requesting bar owners to provide smoke-free environments and venues. Guess what? Such a place exists. The Northbank hosts all the amenities of a neighborhood tavern, including karaoke and sound equipment for your favorite DJ. Until Oregonians get on the ball and make it safe for everyone to go out for an evening without forced exposure to deadly and disgusting secondhand smoke, let's take advantage of an opportunity that exists now. Portlanders, welcome to your new nonsmoking bar.

Actually, if you take into account professional sports, Washington scores even higher yet than Oregon. Its Seattle Seahawks are headed off to the grand prize Super Bowl, whereas Oregon has the Portland Trail Blazers, a team struggling with dismal losses and plummeting attendance and ticket sales. With these two factors well-publicized, I'll admit to a bit of cynicism when I heard that the Blazers were interested in sponsoring a "FanOut" night for gay, lesbian, bi and trans people to attend a specially marketed game. Have the Blazers hit the bottom of the old marketing barrel, or could this be a sincere effort to reach out and create bonds with a new segment of the community? While I'm quick to thank and encourage support from our friends and allies in the business community, I'm also occasionally put off by Johnny-come-latelies knocking on the door of a now nationally recognized and growing niche market: the gay and lesbian consumer.

A phone call to the Blazers front office revealed that the organization has an equal employment opportunity clause that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. So, what the heck, let's give them a shot. All relationships start with a "first date," then flourish or flounder from that point on. I bet that if we show up in force, the Blazers will be more responsive to building further ties to our community. A lot of kids from the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center and Outside In might enjoy donated tickets to an undersold game. Also, with Portland building a new gay and lesbian community center,


donations of used sports equipment from our new partner could go far in showing that the Trail Blazers view us as more than a one-night stand. For further information on the game and to purchase tickets, visit www.pridenw.org.

Does anyone besides me find a certain irony in the fact that Basic Rights Oregon, the state's most prominent civil rights organization, is auctioning off people during Black History Month? With all the rain, I guess I'm watching too much History Channel programming.

While still watching television, I was not impressed with a recent episode of everyone's favorite, *The L Word*. The drama featured a less-than-flattering sexually charged characterization of a U.S. senator. It seemed clear that the character was meant to represent Hillary Clinton, but what was the point of this negative portrayal? Is this how we show support for past and potential political allies—by taking cheap shots? Who's writing this show, Dick Cheney's staff?

Mayor Tom Potter has presented his plan to provide funding for local schools via a new income tax on Portland citizens. With his proposal comes both support and grumbling. The grumbling comes from many directions, but I've heard more than once the complaint that those who don't have kids, including many gay and lesbian households, shouldn't have to pay this additional tax. I disagree. The fact that you're reading this column right now places you with two obligations. First, thank the teacher who taught you, and second, thank those who paid for *your* own education. If you can't view the tax as a means of paying it forward, then you should look at it as a means of paying it back.

Kudos to *Just Out* staff members Sarah Dougher and Jaymee R. Cuti for their excellent in-depth interview with Multnomah County Chair Diane Linn. Highlights of the conversation are printed in this issue, with the interview in its entirety available at www.justout.com. A visit there will also provide you with Web-only articles on the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito and remembrances of Coretta Scott King.

Finally, much attention has been paid of late to the ongoing strife and dissension between the four female commissioners of Multnomah County. I wish to add my voice to the growing chorus of those who respectfully ask—nay, beg—these strong, wonderful women to settle their differences and resolve to work together to best serve the citizens who elected them to do so. Individually you are powerful, talented and skilled women, and we've seen what you can accomplish when you work together. We miss our commissioners and their once-delightful camaraderie. If it was an apology that started this rift, then let another end it. 



"Those were the days, my friend. We thought they'd never end...."

ON THE COVER

Our "Sex Issue" cover girl is the infamous Linah Cocaine of Sissyboy. In the drag troupe's next show, "Sissyboy 9 to 5," Linah and Precious are living the high life running a cutting-edge fashion magazine...until love enters the picture, and everything goes to hell in a Prada handbag. Check it out 11 p.m. Feb. 15 at Holocene, 1001 S.E. Morrison St. Admission is \$5.



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24 hours on Gay.com; sexual addiction; lesbian sex books

NEWS

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Diane Linn interviewed; Q Center rollout announced; Illuminations Project gets big grant; join Equity for annual fete; Gay into Straight America sends word

16-17 NATIONAL

Sharpton asks churches to help end "poisoned atmosphere"; Virginia marriage amendment moves forward; Maryland politics shaken up by marriage ruling; gay families to take part in White House Easter egg roll; Maryland governor proposes expanding partner rights; Colorado groups approve marriage amendment language; "gay panic" defense limited; national conference on aging to feature sessions on queer older adults

18-19 WORLD

Australia tries to stop citizens from marrying overseas; Euro Parliament demands clampdown on homophobia; South African Human Rights Commission supports gay blood donors; Nigeria to ban same-sex marriage; N.Z. gay men banned from donating sperm; Australian tennis star comes out

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