

"So, the one night stand worked?"



"Maybe it's time to get that bigger place...?"



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## northwest

# Progressives Face Off

Portlanders choose between candidates with records of support for queers

by Jaymee R. Cuti



Erik Sten is defending his seat on the Portland City Council.

**E**rik Sten was once the young idealist on the Portland City Council. Today, he says his values are in the majority, with the additions of tireless, openly gay Commissioner Sam Adams and left-leaning Mayor Tom Potter.

"In my first term, I'd find policies weren't progressive enough," Sten said. "This time the council is in the same place I am, and I'm trying to make our strategies more solid and defensible. It's a wonderful change of roles."

But just as Sten is finding his stride, his seat is being challenged by state Sen. Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, who also brings years of experience and a strong record for liberal politics.

Sten and his staff are working with the mayor's office on the new school funding plan and ways to make it more fair to small-business owners. Other pet projects are the controversial publicly financed elections; a 10-year plan to irradiate chronic homelessness, which has seen success in its first year; and the creation of a publicly owned utility company through the city's acquisition of Portland General Electric.

"We're in the middle of some battles that I'm a key part of winning," said Sten.

But his opponent says Sten is distracted from the core issues of running the city. If elected, Burdick says she'll focus on fiscal management of city bureaus with a particularly interest in the methamphetamine crisis, job creation and public safety.

"Erik has not only lost his sense of priority, but he's had a record of failure," said Burdick.

Sten continues to get guff for some amateur blunders such as his role in purchasing a flawed water billing system that cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

"I'm going to keep making mistakes," he said. "If you want someone that doesn't make mistakes, they're not going to change anything."

He has since made headway in a variety of policies in line with his progressive values. His publicly funded elections project is a hot-button issue.

According to Sten, publicly funded elections—where candidates who raise \$5 from 1,000 different people qualify to receive up to \$350,000 in matching funds—keep candidates' integrity intact. "It allows anyone to run without selling their soul or their vote," he said.

As a senator, Burdick has walked an extremely liberal line, racking up wins in the arenas of gun control, pedestrian and bicycle safety and drug abuse by co-authoring the Methamphetamine Package.

Both candidates come with a measurable record of supporting the sexual minorities community, and both are supporters of same-sex marriage. They also attest to a desire to help Adams in requiring that city contractors provide equal benefits for same-sex partners.

Burdick voted for Senate Bill 1000, the state's failed anti-discrimination legislation, and testified against Oregon's Defense of Marriage Act bill in 1997. She donates to both Basic Rights Oregon and the Human Rights Campaign and was an outspoken

member of the No on 36 endorsement committee.

"We are denying a fundamental right to a segment of our population that is no different from the rest of us except in whom they love," Burdick said.

Sten has supported the domestic partnership registry, co-sponsored the Equal Benefits Ordinance and funded the startup study for Q Center through the housing bureau. Within hours of waking, he arrived at the Multnomah Building to greet and support hundreds of same-sex couples lined up to get married in March 2004.

"I wanted to congratulate people and feel the love in the air," he said. "I also wanted to show political solidarity and lend whatever help my presence in office delivers."

Today, Sten sees his work with homeless communities as assisting many queer youth, who are disproportionately represented among the homeless.

Burdick's campaign is plagued by the appearance of a conflict of interest. She is a public relations specialist with Gard & Gerber, a firm that represents PGE and opposes Sten's publicly financed city elections.

Burdick says her record will stand up to scrutiny. As a senator, she voted for the bill to prevent PGE from collecting taxes it didn't pay and supports investigating PGE's perceived tax scandal. She is also declining donations from the corporation or any of its officers.

To Sten, Burdick's connections to PGE still smell fishy.

"The fact that she's trying to distance herself from her clients should tell you something," he said. "Her employer is being paid by PGE to fight voter-owned elections. That fight is the centerpiece of her campaign, but she's not taking money from them. That kind of tightrope walking is the very thing voters are sick of." **10**

For more information about the candidates, visit [www.ginnyburdickforportland.com](http://www.ginnyburdickforportland.com) and [www.erikforportland.com](http://www.erikforportland.com).



Ginny Burdick has made a commitment to sexual minority causes.