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### STAFF WRITER

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Krause, Gary Morris, Jenny Nguyen, Holly

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**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](mailto:justout@justout.com).  
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## northwest



Roey Thorpe, executive director of Basic Rights Oregon, has resigned.

### Roey Thorpe Announces Resignation

\*After five years of leading Oregon's largest and most powerful queer rights organization, executive director Roey Thorpe is stepping down.

After her resignation from Basic Rights Oregon effective June 30, Thorpe will become program director at the New York-based Freedom to Marry, a national gay and nongay partnership working to end discrimination in marriage. Thorpe, who is staying in Portland, will be responsible for implementing a state-by-state strategy.

Thorpe says that BRO is the strongest it's ever been and that the staff will continue carrying out the mission of building a civil rights movement that achieves full equality for sexual minorities.

"We have expanded our work to become truly statewide. We have a field and communications program that is mobilizing thousands of people across the state. We have a lot of political influence, and we're a more stable organization with a clearer action plan than we've ever had," said Thorpe.

The group has a presence through staff members or action teams in Bend, Medford, Salem and Corvallis. Through partnerships, BRO also has a reach in Eugene and The Dalles.

The nonprofit's goal has always been to build a civil rights movement, said Thorpe, and its partners in achieving equality have expanded widely since 2004. "We've dramatically increased the number of people involved with the organization."

According to Thorpe, 80 people lobbied the Oregon Legislature for queer causes in 2003. That number swelled to 4,500 in the last legislative session, with more than 50,000 contacts made with legislators. The group's e-mail list also has grown from 800 to 11,000 people since 2003.

Defeats in recent years did not factor into Thorpe's decision to resign, she says. Despite the loss of civil unions through Senate Bill 1000; the passage of Measure 36, restricting marriage to one man and one woman; and the nullification of 3,000 same-sex marriages in Multnomah County, Thorpe says successes are innumerable.

"I've always taken the long view of this movement, and I know we'll be taking some losses before we take this victory. The biggest reason that we're winning is the shift I've seen in expectations of GLBTQ people in the last five years. GLBTQ people aren't satisfied by just beating anti-gay ballot measures. They want legal equality. They

want a proactive movement, and they're creating one," said Thorpe.

The BRO board has engaged a recruiting firm to oversee a national search for Thorpe's replacement. Longtime board member and activist Frank Dixon will assume the role of interim director until a permanent director is found. An appointment is expected by the end of August.

Thorpe says she will be available as a resource to the organization and the new director.

She had this to say to *Just Out* readers: "It's been an honor to lead this organization. I'm sad that I'm leaving my job, and I'm hoping that through the new job, I will still remain in contact with so many people I've met in our community. Keep up the fight."

### Oregonian Lobbies Washington

The charged political climate on Capitol Hill surrounding the proposed constitutional amendment on gay marriage did not intimidate the 70 U.S. military veterans who stormed Washington, D.C., on May 16, which was Servicemembers Legal Defense Network's (SLDN) fourth Lobby Day. Their goal to convince members of Congress to support House Resolution 1059 was a success with the 116th signature given by House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

Retired Navy Cmdr. Beth Coye of Ashland was the sole Oregon delegate. She was born in San Diego to a World War II submariner who retired as an admiral. An officer candidate school graduate in 1960, Coye did not have the same career opportunities as her father. Through her activism in the '60s and '70s, which she chronicles in the epistolary political creative memoir *My Navy Too*, Coye helped battle the military's discrimination against female service members.

Unlike the very vocal women's movement of the '70s, queer service members are prohibited from speaking out for themselves under the discriminatory "don't ask, don't tell" law. "Gay and lesbian military veterans and retirees have to stand up for active duty members," says Coye.

SLDN, which has primarily worked to fight anti-gay discrimination cases, has the new political focus of lifting the ban on gays and lesbians in the military. After thorough training that involved legal and political lectures as well as stimulating

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