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Dear Oregon, Love Hillary

Hillary Clinton addresses *Just Out* readers

by Jaymee R. Cuti

Weeks after her daughter's surprise appearance at Portland's Red Dress Party, U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., continues campaigning for the gay vote.

Via e-mail, Clinton told *Just Out* she plans to demolish "don't ask, don't tell" and remove boundaries for same-sex couples to adopt children.

Will the senator's investment in queer Oregonians pay off May 20?

Just Out: What is it about you that resonates with gay voters?

Hillary Clinton: I firmly believe that every American, regardless of who they are or who they love, should be able to live free of discrimination and that those in committed relationships should have the same rights, responsibilities and benefits as all Americans. I've been proud to fight against the far right in their efforts to prevent progress on behalf of LGBT Americans. My beliefs, along with my work for LGBT rights as U.S. senator, as first lady and as a candidate for president, has resonated with LGBT voters, and I am gratified for their support.

- I am proud that as chair of the Senate Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee in 2006, I worked closely with the Human Rights Campaign and other LGBT groups to develop a smart strategy that defeated the Federal Marriage Amendment.

- I am a proud co-sponsor of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, the Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act and the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligation Act, which would grant the same benefits to domestic partners of federal employees that are currently offered to employees' legal spouses.

- I championed the Early Treatment for HIV Act, which expands access to vital treatment options for low-income individuals living with HIV, and fought to fully fund the Ryan White CARE Act.

- I hired a national director of LGBT outreach within a month of announcing my candidacy for president and to have openly gay and lesbian staffers serving at all levels of my campaign.

- I am proud to have the strong support of a National LGBT Steering Committee of over 135 that includes openly LGBT elected officials and opinion leaders on issues ranging from transgender rights to HIV/AIDS to "don't ask, don't tell."

- I have marched in Gay Pride parades as both first lady and as senator and have spoken in front of many LGBT audiences ranging from the HRC, the Empire State Pride Agenda, the Hetrick Martin Institute, PFLAG and the Gay Men's Health Crisis. I was the only candidate to accept the HRC's Board Meeting and Equality Convention in March 2007 to address the HRC.

When I am president, we will work together to make sure that all Americans in committed relationships have equal benefits and that loving same-sex couples are not automatically disqualified from adopting children in need. We're going to enact inclusive federal hate crimes and

Employment Non-Discrimination legislation. And finally, we will put an end to the failed policy of "don't ask, don't tell." Courage, honor, patriotism and sacrifice—the traits that define our men and women in uniform—have nothing to do with sexual orientation.

JO: As president, would you consider creating a Cabinet-level position in your White House, such as that which you have proposed to address poverty in the country, to address queer issues and rights?

HC: As president, I will do everything I can to further the cause of fair and equal treatment of LGBT Americans. We need a president committed to fighting for a hate crimes law and a fully inclusive ENDA and to changing the laws that treat same-sex couples in committed relationships differently. I have not yet decided how I will organize my administration, but I think it is critical

equality of federal benefits for same-sex couples in committed, stable, loving relationships. The benefits, rights and privileges, like the Family and Medical Leave Act, and Social Security survivor's benefits, that are provided to married couples and their families in federal law should be available to same-sex couples. As president, I will fight for full equality of rights, responsibilities and benefits for same-sex couples.

JO: Your daughter, Chelsea, who by her own admission does not control her schedule or appearances, has begun making appearances at gay events and venues on the campaign trail. Is this part of a strategic move on behalf of your campaign to shore up gay support? Are you down with Chelsea partying it up with the gays?



Hillary Clinton says she is grateful for her daughter Chelsea's presence on the campaign trail.

to have strong and diverse views, including those of LGBT Americans, integrated throughout all agencies.

I have put together perhaps the most diverse presidential campaign in American history, and I am committed to having the most diverse administration in our history. I will ensure that our government—in the White House, throughout all departments and on the courts—truly reflects America's diverse backgrounds and values.

JO: Will you consider signing a same-sex marriage law?

HC: The question of marriage is one that historically has been left to the states. That's why I opposed the so-called Federal Marriage Amendment, because discrimination has no place in the Constitution.

I believe gay and lesbian couples should have the same rights and responsibilities as all Americans and that civil unions are the best way to achieve this goal. As president, I will fight for

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—Hillary Clinton

I have proposed a comprehensive plan to fight HIV/AIDS at home and abroad. You can read my plan at HillaryClinton.com.

My plan calls for doubling the HIV/AIDS research budget within the National Institutes of Health to \$5.2 billion annually, including the U.S. contribution towards finding a vaccine. My American Health Choices Plan will ensure that all Americans living with HIV/AIDS have access to care, and I will extend Medicaid eligibility to low-income Americans living with HIV by the end of my first term.

I will also increase funding for the Ryan White CARE Act and enact the Early Treatment for HIV/AIDS, which expands access to vital treatment options for low-income individuals living with HIV. I am the chief co-sponsor of this legislation in the Senate.

I believe that education is key to preventing HIV infection, especially among young people. That's why I will end the Bush administration's abstinence-only policy and instead fund evidence-based HIV/AIDS prevention programs that teach young people to delay having sex as part of a comprehensive prevention message.

We must also address the disproportionate burden of HIV/AIDS among minority communities. African Americans account for almost 50 percent of new infections, and the rates of infection in the Latino community remain high. We need to increase funding for the Minority AIDS Initiative and support the prevention and treatment efforts of minority-run community-based organizations. I will invest funds to provide housing and other supportive services to people living HIV/AIDS.

I want to increase federal funding for substance abuse treatment, which often leads to high-risk behavior that can lead to infection. By taking steps to crack down on substance abuse and help users seek treatment, the chance that people will contract HIV can be greatly reduced.

Finally, I will bring all federal efforts to tackle HIV/AIDS into a single comprehensive national strategy that will allow for better cooperation and more efficient and effective allocation of resources so that we can stop and reverse the increase in HIV infection.

JO: Do transgender people deserve the same panoply of rights as gays and lesbians? If the version of ENDA that excludes transgender people from employment nondiscrimination protections were to come across the U.S. Senate floor during your remaining time as a senator, would you vote for or against it, and why?

HC: I believe every individual, regardless of who they are or who they love, should be able to live and work in safety and be valued for their unique contributions. Gender identity is a very personal matter, and as president, I will work to ensure that transgender individuals are not discriminated against and are included in hate crimes and ENDA legislation. 10