

letters

Children's Levy Supports Vulnerable Portlanders

TO THE EDITOR:

As executive director of Outside In, I work to serve some of the most vulnerable citizens of Portland. Each day, homeless youth face a host of challenges brought on by abuse, neglect, discrimination and low expectations. Of the nearly 2,000 homeless youth in Portland, 90 percent have reported violence in their homes, and 30 percent are sexual minorities. The sexual orientation of these teens is often the reason their families put them out on the street. These challenges take courage and hope to overcome, and as a community we all share the urgent responsibility to help our young people by giving them that hope and the tools they need to meet their futures with courage. This is why I fully support Measure 26-94, which will renew the Children's Levy at the same rate voters passed in 2002.

Programs that focus on early education, mentoring and abuse prevention have been proven to keep kids on the right track and provide resources youth may otherwise be unable to access. The Children's Levy serves 16,000 kids each year in Portland. Research has shown that the investment pays off—by increasing high school graduation rates, leading to higher-paying jobs, and lowering youth involvement with substance abuse, teen pregnancy and the criminal justice system. We can all agree that these are favorable outcomes. Thousands of young people each year are given the support they need to live their lives with hope and responsibility, making our community stronger for all of us.

With the downturn in the economy, supporting our most vulnerable citizens will be more important than ever. I urge Portland voters to continue supporting the Children's Levy and vote yes on Measure 26-94!

KATHY OLIVER
Outside In

Editor's Note: Outside In is a service agency that receives funds from the Children's Levy.

Demand Change in the Senate

TO THE EDITOR:

Six years ago, *Just Out* published my letter supporting Gordon Smith ["Support Smith," Oct. 18, 2002].

I was wrong. A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then, and I would never presume to support that man again. The theme before was that we needed someone on our side in Republican

councils. Having him there in the past six years did not result in his being on our side, though.

Basic Rights Oregon's Jeana Frazzini rightly points out: "After more than a decade of Sen. Smith, we still have no federal hate crimes law. We still have no federal nondiscrimination law. And Smith supports a federal law that denies committed gay couples critical legal protections, even if they register for a domestic partnership in Oregon." Even the Human Rights Campaign, which took out a full-page ad for Smith in *Just Out* six years ago, no longer supports Smith.

My own conversations with Smith, urging him not to vote for a Federal Marriage Amendment, netted a big fat zero. He is so scared that a court will declare marriage equality to be a constitutional right that he's willing to besmirch our Constitution with a limitation on the requirements for equal protection and due process. His refusal to recognize equality for gays and lesbians is one of several reasons why I am no longer a Republican.

On the other side of the coin, Oregon House Speaker Jeff Merkley is by far a better candidate for the U.S. Senate than Smith. Merkley deserves our support not only because of his courageous leadership in support of equality for gays and lesbians in Oregon (nondiscrimination and domestic partnerships granting the same benefits to our families that accrue to other families) but also because of his leadership in forward-looking legislation of all kinds. I am proud to speak out for him, just as he was happy to support me and other gay or lesbian candidates when we ran for the Legislature in 2006.

Last but not least, the many problems America faces require a senatorial team that works together for a change. Smith has canceled out some 1,700 votes by Sen. Ron Wyden. Everlasting war, financial meltdown and widespread corruption demand this change in the Senate. Replacing Smith with Merkley is one way you can help all Americans.

LEE COLEMAN
Aloha

Kate Brown Has Queer Cred

TO THE EDITOR:

Stephen Marc Beaudoin's recent column "Sexual Identity Politics" left me confused [Oct. 3]. I'm still not quite sure whether he thinks state Sen. Kate Brown is the right choice for Oregon secretary of state—though *Just Out* certainly thinks so, as shown by the paper's endorse-

ment—or just wishes she'd get a new haircut.

I have no doubt that the political interests of our LGBT community are more substantive than that. In her role as state legislator and Senate president, Kate has been a steadfast, outspoken champion for LGBT equality. That's why she won a strong endorsement from Basic Rights Oregon's Equality PAC. And that's why so many in our community are standing with Kate in this election.

If there's a litmus test for physical presentation of those allowed to describe themselves as queer candidates, that's news to us. It seems like rather dated stereotyping to imply that any woman politician who identifies as lesbian or bisexual ought to have a "bullish, short-cropped superdyke" do or make a "drag show appearance" to validate her queer cred.

For the record, as many LGBT Oregonians are fully aware:

In 1993, Kate Brown played a key role in passing House Bill 3500, a bill that ended the ability of the Oregon Citizens Alliance to pass city and county ordinances denying LGBT Oregonians basic rights under the law. These efforts had been passing in dozens of rural counties, and taken together they threatened to devastate the moral and the financial ability of our movement to respond to these attacks.

Every legislative session since then, Kate has been at the forefront of efforts to move equality forward. Kate was there to fight attempts to codify hatred and bigotry into law, such as in 1999 when a record five anti-gay bills were introduced in the Legislature. She played a pivotal role in turning back Kevin Mannix's attempt to put a marriage ban referral out to voters. And she helped keep Mannix from passing bills to roll back the clock on the Tanner vs. Oregon Health Sciences University decision, which provided us with the only employment protections we had until the passage of Senate Bill 2 in 2007.

Finally, Kate was a key leader last year when

the Legislature passed historic anti-discrimination protections and created domestic partnerships.

The BRO Equality PAC, the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund and other LGBT equality groups are proud to support Kate with our endorsements, our time and our dollars because she delivers. Few public officials—gay, straight or otherwise—can point to a record so consistently supportive; among public officials in leadership positions, her record is almost singular.

Unlike Beaudoin, I've actually gone to the trouble to speak with Kate Brown about her record and positions, as well as watch her in action as a legislator and candidate. As an openly gay man who has been involved in LGBT political work for 18 years, I have the highest regard for her unparalleled history of leadership on our issues and will cast an enthusiastic vote for her in next month's general election, as will thousands of other LGBT Oregonians.

TODD SIMMONS
Basic Rights Oregon Equality PAC Board Member

Roster of Dishonor

TO THE EDITOR:

On Dec. 4, 1995, a psychopath stalked, tortured and murdered Michelle Abdill and Roxanne Ellis, two Medford women who had been devoted life partners for 12 years. He confessed in writing that their lesbian identity "made it easier to kill them." The sickening hate crime traumatized the Medford and haunts many there to this day.

During Gordon Smith's 1996 senatorial race, he was endorsed by the rabidly homophobic Oregon Citizens Alliance. In 2004, he supported Measure 36, which defined marriage as restricted to a man and a woman.

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NOTABLES



Bruce Whiting (left) and Steve Peter exchanged commitment vows Aug. 23. The ceremony, officiated by Joe Doherty, was held at the private gardens of Deborah Meyers, with the reception held at the nearby home of Mr. and Mrs. Cliff Goldman.

Visiting family from Arkansas, Nebraska and California were in attendance, along with friends from throughout the Northwest. Music was provided by Molly Scholz and Doug Fraser, followed by special appearance by the "Chorus of the Goddess Flora and Deadhead Society."

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