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elections

Election 2008 Roundup!

Oregon gets a new gay-friendly senator, Silverton gets a trans mayor and other great election results

by Stephen Marc Beaudoin

Nov. 4, 2008: The crowds were boozy and raucous. The drag queens were generous with red and blue Jell-O shots. The quasi-closeted CNN anchor Anderson Cooper interviewed hip-hop artist will.i.am live—by hologram. And a thick crowd of Portland's gays and allies were out on the town having the time of their lives to celebrate a spate of local and national 2008 election victories.

"I'm overwhelmed," yelled 42-year-old lesbian Jackie Thomas, a Nike marketing director, over a screaming crowd at Aura on West Burnside Street. Barack Obama had just been announced as the likely winner in the presidential contest.

Indeed the city of Portland was swelling with heady crowds, all buzzing and boozing over not only the election of Obama as our country's 44th president, but also about the long list of ballot races on the forefront of many queer voters' minds.

Mark Stephen Brown, a 45-year-old gay Portland Opera box office manager, was one reveler at Aura who had the U.S. Senate race between Rep. Jeff Merkley, D-Portland and incum-

bent Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., on his mind. "I think Smith was a good moderate Republican," he said, apologetically. "But still, he voted with George Bush, and he is on the right and I go left. I wouldn't vote Republican for dog-catcher."

Here are the races that mattered most to *Just Out*.

For more complete elections results and ongoing news and commentary, visit the *Just Out* blog at www.justout.com.

Federal Races

U.S. Senator: Jeff Merkley (D) v. Gordon Smith (R)

Winner: Jeff Merkley

Surprise?: Aside from Obama's election, the next best blessing of this election cycle.

The gays say: "I think he has our issues in mind," 51-year-old lesbian Wendy Blenning, a national Human Rights Campaign board of governors member, says of the senator-elect.

This was the race to watch this season—Smith's ever-more-desperate re-election campaign against the ever-more-steady Oregon House Speaker Merkley—and it delivered months of jaw-

State Legislature Shakedowns

- **Red light:** A number of anti-gay legislators who signed on to initiatives this year intended to repeal the Oregon Family Fairness Act and Oregon Equality Act won re-election, including state Sen. Fred Girod, R-Stayton, and Reps. Sal Esquivel, R-Medford, and Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer.

- Also elected to another term: state Rep. Vicki Berger, R-Salem, a rare Republican who supported both bills in the 2007 session, and spoke to *Just Out* this past summer about her support for queer equality ["The Death of Oregon's Anti-Gay Movement," July 18].

- Out lesbian state Rep. Tina Kotek, D-Portland, didn't garner any opposition and sailed to an easy second term.

- Was openly gay Libertarian candidate Marc Delphine a spoiler in the race for Oregon House District 26? At press time the number of votes he garnered (just over 1,200) was a little more than the difference between the neck-and-neck opponents, Republican Matt Wingard and Democrat Jessica Adamson.

- Fresh-faced Democratic House candidate Nick Kahl beat out a formidable opponent, Republican John Nelsen, to claim former House Speaker Karen Minnis' seat in District 49. Nelsen, for the record, granted an endorsement interview to *Just Out* in advance of the election; Kahl canceled his interview and refused all further requests. Sure, Basic Rights Oregon poured some serious cash into Kahl's campaign, but why did he avoid speaking to the state's gay publication of record in advance of the contest? It gives us pause.

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