

NORTHWEST NEWS

be passed this Congress is indeed dependent on momentum.

"There are lots and lots of items that are competing for legislative air time," said Blumenauer, noting health care and climate change legislation as heavy contenders. "But I think we've got specific things moving forward, from hate crimes to Don't Ask Don't Tell. I suspect that the administration will work for this to create some space in the legislative agenda to take the ones that are most likely to move.

"I am not yet writing off this session of Congress," he added. "I'd like to do more listening and talking, but it's just a matter of time, and I really do believe that we have watched political attitudes towards fundamental civil liberties protection based on sexual orientation really strengthen, gain momentum."

The congressman noted that people under the age of 35 have "wondered what all the shouting was about" with regard to the issue of discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"[Those under 35] don't share that discriminatory bent. They have too many gay and lesbian friends, the media, their own lifestyle and preferences," continued Blumenauer. "Our goal is to have a full-court press to engage people, to work at the grassroots level, and to make clear the broad base of support and the airtight, ironclad rationale for the policy changes, so that it happens sooner rather than later."

Rep. Blumenauer said the response to news of his co-sponsorship of RMA has been "overwhelmingly positive," particularly concerning the congressman's willingness to admit he was wrong.

"His comments show that he has learned that the old strategy will not work," said Camille White-Avian, co-founder of Portland Equal Rights Coalition. "Hopefully Rep. Blumenauer can help other people see that there is no reason to hold back these rights any longer."

Kevin L. Easton, executive director for Equity Foundation, echoed the supportive sentiments.

"It is never too late to change one's mind and vote in line with equality and non-dis-



MARTY DAVIS

Says Rep. Earl Blumenauer about repealing the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act: "I am not yet writing off this session of Congress. I'd like to do more listening and talking, but it's just a matter of time, and I really do believe that we have watched political attitudes towards fundamental civil liberties protection based on sexual orientation really strengthen, gain momentum."

crimination," he said. "As an organization that promotes social change towards social justice, Congressman Blumenauer's change of position is exactly the kind of welcome change we at Equity Foundation strive for. I hope other fair-minded members of Congress on both sides of the political aisle follow in his footsteps."

Rep. Blumenauer pointed out that it will take time to clarify and address all aspects of the push to get RMA through Congress.

"We are going to be spending quite a bit of time here this fall. So there's going to be an opportunity for the sort of informal discussion that I think is going to help clarify and move forward," explained Blumenauer. "This is something that is going to be a personal decision for a lot of people. I think this fall is going to be a great time to be able to have those quiet conversations; it's a great time for what's happening back home to coalesce with what's happening here in Washington, and we'll know a lot more in a couple of months." JO

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