

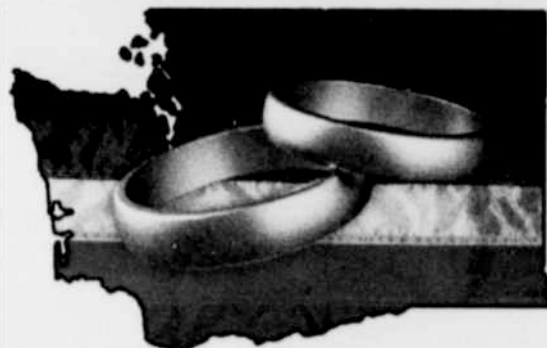
Marriage Equality Legislation Introduced in Washington State House and Senate

Valentine's Day proved to be a fitting backdrop for the introduction of State Bill 5793 to Washington state's legislature, as Democratic Senator Ed Murray (43rd District) introduced a new marriage equality bill in the Senate. Democratic State Representative Jim Moeller (49th District) introduced a companion bill on Tuesday, February 15. As of press time, 15 senators had backed the measure in the Senate, while 43 representatives had sponsored the House version.

Both Moeller and Murray—who make up one-third of openly gay members of the state legislature—expressed their confidence in the bill being passed, stemming from the progress made in Washington over the past decade toward gay equality.

"We've made tremendous progress since 1998," Murray said in a statement. "Gay and lesbian families in Washington now enjoy the same state spousal rights that their married straight friends enjoy—except for the name 'marriage.' The recognition that their loving, lifelong commitment is no different from the loving, lifelong commitment of straight couples is the final step to achieving full equality. I believe the legislature and the public are both ready to take that final step."

Ty Stober, vice chair of Equal Rights Washington, said, cautiously, that because members of the



LGBTQ caucus are now in significant leadership roles in the legislature, "we think they're in a position to potentially move [SB 5793] forward."

The legislation protects religious freedom and the rights of clergy and religious institutions to determine for whom to perform marriage ceremonies and which marriages to recognize for their religious purposes. The option for a couple to seek a domestic partnership is maintained.

Whether the legislation will be signed into law should it reach the desk of Governor Chris Gregoire remains unclear; she has stated her support of civil unions that grant the same rights as a marriage, but believes that "marriage" is church domain.

"It has not gotten that far where it had to be an open discussion," explained Stober. "There's definitely a question for us about 2012 and the next governor's race. That's really when this will become a key issue. If we can't move forward on marriage equality by 2012, that 2012 governor's race is going to become very important for us."

JUST OUT will follow this story as it develops.

—Ryan J. Prado

Pride NW Expands 2011 Festival Offerings

Summer may still feel far away, but Pride Northwest is already busy planning a Portland Pride celebration that is bigger and better than ever, inspired by the theme for Pride 2011: "Make It Happen."

"As part of our continuing goal of expanding the meaning and value of Pride, we're adding some additional features this year," said Mark Santillo, secretary and outreach coordinator for Pride NW.

This year, Pride-sponsored events will span the entire week preceding the waterfront festival, which will kick off Friday night with a dance party. The party will take place early in the evening so as not to conflict with the plethora of late-night events and will include a roster of prominent local DJs, as well as food and alcohol.

The community stage will be reworked to create a pavilion with a covered stage and rows of seating for people to enjoy acoustic music, spoken word and community programming. The festival will also include a college fair featuring LGBTQ-friendly colleges and universities and an expanded travel expo with more providers.

In addition to the weekend's festivities, Portland Pride will feature a week's worth of events leading up to the festival and parade.

"What we're trying to do is expand Pride from just being Saturday and Sunday to an en-

tire week of events across [the] city that engages a variety of cultural institutions" to celebrate LGBTQ culture, Santillo said.

While many of these collaborations are still in the works, Santillo confirmed that Pride NW will co-sponsor Triangle Productions' queer musical *Zanna Don't*.

In other Pride NW news, the board has approved a budget to provide financial and other support to community projects that uphold the

Pride NW aims of arts, voice, visibility, empowerment and celebration. Santillo said a list of this year's recipients would be announced soon.

Although the board lost two members since last year—Vice President Hank Ren-

frow and Entertainment Coordinator Ejiria Walker—Santillo said the remaining members are focused on organizing the upcoming festival and will tend to board development after the June 17-19 events.

Still, Santillo said the board welcomes community members to get involved by volunteering to help with committees or simply showing up to share their perspectives at the monthly open meetings, held every first Monday at Q Center.

For more on Pride 2011: *Make It Happen*, visit pridenw.org.

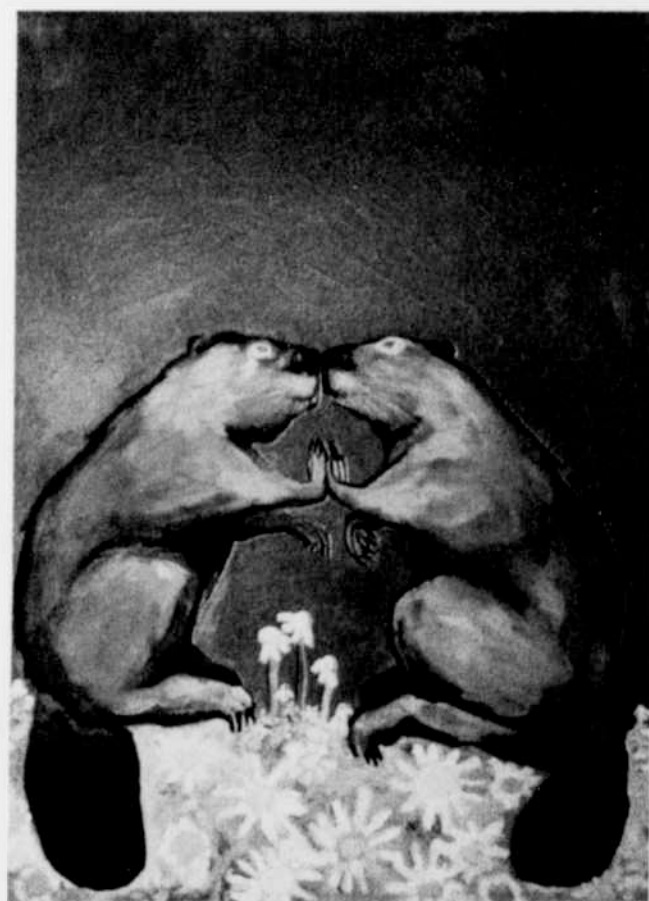
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Beth A. Allen, founding partner: winner of the Oregon Gay & Lesbian Law Association (OGALLA) Silver Jubilee Award; OGALLA Award of Merit; and the Basic Rights Oregon Superhero Award. Selected as a 2010 Oregon Super Lawyer. Founding member of the BRO Legal Group; author of *Same-Sex Marriage: a Conflicts of Law Analysis for Oregon*; frequent local, state and national speaker on marriage equality.