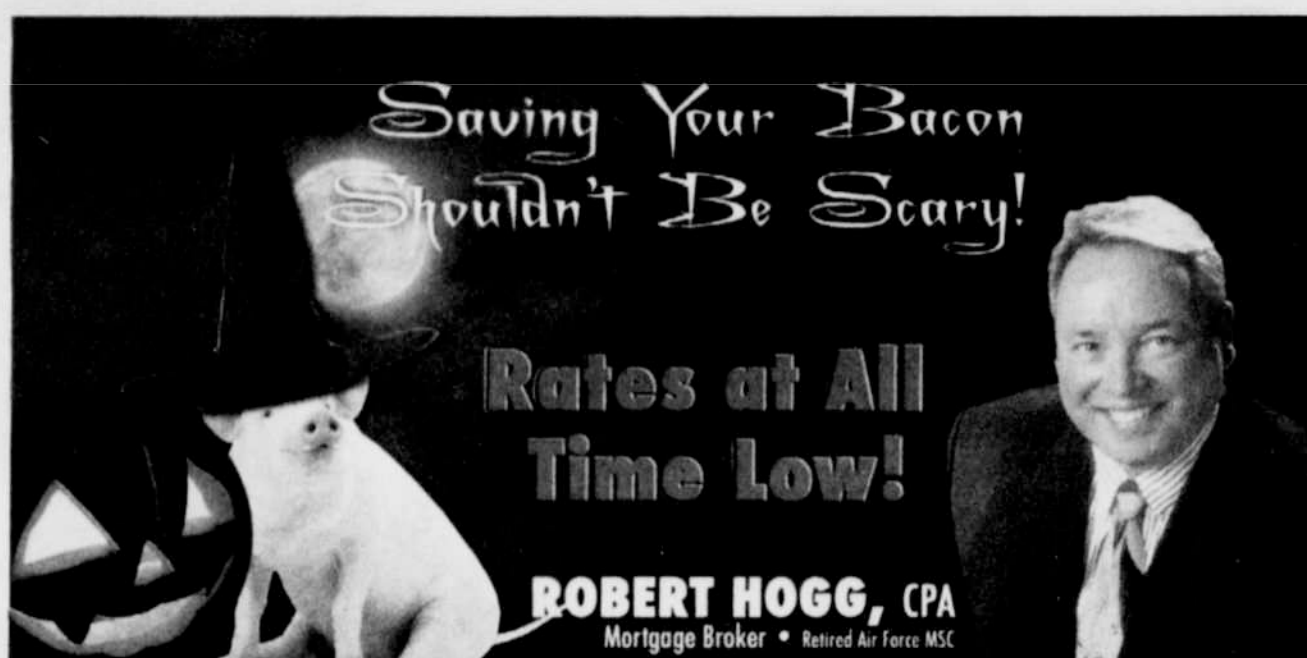


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And Justice For All

Basic Rights Oregon to hold
Trans Justice Health Care Summit

BY AARON SPENCER

This summer, the Portland City Council unanimously approved a health care plan option that covers sex reassignment surgery for transgender city employees.

Now, Portland is one of five municipalities in the country that offers the trinity of transgender health care benefits: counseling, hormone therapy and surgery. Multnomah County and the city and county of San Francisco had already offered the coverage. The city of Seattle announced October 7 it would add transgender surgery to its health plan next year. This is in addition to several businesses—including Nike, Google and Microsoft—that offer the coverage. The health care is supported by the American Medical Association as medically necessary.

But staff at Basic Rights Oregon, who led the charge for trans-inclusive health care in Portland, want to take the issue statewide. The nonprofit is holding a Trans Justice Health Care Summit October 29 at Q Center in hopes it can rally troops to get trans health care discrimination banned in Oregon.

"Overall, we want to magnify the trans community and get them involved in this campaign," says Joe LeBlanc, who as a part of BRO's trans justice working group is organizing the effort.

About 100 people are expected at the leadership summit, a daylong event that includes lessons on various topics, from trans health care issues to activism.

Some sessions are meant to help trans individuals navigate the system to get health care. Nineteen percent of trans people report being refused medical care due to their transgender or gender non-conforming status, according to numbers from the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Trans people are also unemployed at double the rate of the general population.

Some programs will provide education about topics like health care for trans children and the disparities that exist between trans and non-trans people.

"Most people even in the LGB community don't even have an awareness of trans issues," LeBlanc says, "so it's a lot of work. It's a lot of outreach. It's not going to be anything quick."

Other sessions will focus on activism: how to lobby legislators and approach businesses with trans health care issues. LeBlanc says BRO doesn't have concrete plans for its state health care crusade, but its general strategy is to target businesses, cities and




"Most people even in the LGB community don't even have an awareness of trans issues, so it's a lot of work. It's a lot of outreach. It's not going to be anything quick."

-JOE LeBLANC

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