

There is strength in having pockets of diversity in our city.

JO: Portland has affirmative action policies to encourage hiring women and ethnic minorities as employees and contractors for the city. While sexual and gender minorities are included in Portland's equal employment opportunity policies, they are not included in the affirmative action policies. Should they be?

JS: My view would be informed by the facts. If the facts suggest employment discrimination and a track record of inequality of opportunity within LGBT communities, then it seems that with respect to groups that have received such discrimination, we've passed rules to address that discrimination. I am always open to facts that say we have to apply those principles in other areas.

JO: As mayor, would you commission any study or do any proactive investigation to determine whether sexual and gender minorities do undergo employment discrimination?

JS: I think there's a conversation that needs to be had on what the ambit of the Office of Equity will be in the administration of the next mayor, and what should be the rank order of priority in the tasks they take on. What I would look for is hearing from the community indications of whether we should spend public money on that investigation. If it looks like there are indications that we should, then we should.

JO: Have you ever known anyone who died of AIDS?

JS: Yes, I have.

JO: Do you know people who are living with HIV now?

JS: Yes, I do.

JO: Do you see a role for the city in addressing these health concerns, or is that outside the role of city government?

JS: We have been involved in needle exchange and condom distribution. Public education also, I think. Every branch of government should bear some responsibility to address prevention. We should look at the tools that we have to see how we can strengthen prevention.

JO: Have you ever worn drag?

JS: Yes.

JO: Are there pictures?

JS: None that are public (grin). Well, maybe. I don't know ... the first time was when I was pretty young. I had fun.

JO: Why should LGBT Portlanders vote for Jefferson Smith?

JS: At the deeper and broader level, I think I will have the deepest commitment to getting the city working better for more people. The team I think we can put together will work pretty hard to see the big picture; will work hard in engaging the community in solving problems in our community and, will look ahead to the future of this century, and better address modern challenges and chances.

In a more specific sense, I have spent the last ten years of my life strengthening progressive interaction and democracy. Communities can trust not just what I say but what I have done. And not just in context of this race or being a politician, but as an advocate and as a human being.

I was marching in Portland's Pride Parade well before I ever needed a vote. LGBT equity alongside economic equity are the civil right battles of our generation. While a mayor is not in a perfect position to resolve those battles, a mayor can have an important spokesperson's role and an important podium and open microphone from which to communicate community values. I recognize that, and I will use that opportunity as best that I can, to advocate and convene for basic justice, basic fairness, for as long as I participate in the public process. ■

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KATE BROWN

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Now, in 2012, Brown is running in a tight race for re-election against a wealthy and well-funded Republican opponent, Knute Buehler. A clear sense of Buehler emerges when you learn that he trumpets loudly for campaign spending limits, yet flatly refused her challenge to jointly limit campaign spending in their own race. Brown offers one word for this: "hypocrisy."

Brown warns that LGBT communities nationwide need to pay particular attention to Secretary of State races. Conservatives are targeting these races because these officials oversee state elections. She says that "nationally, I am seeing huge efforts to suppress voting" through excessive voter I.D. and registration laws being

pushed in response to claims of voter fraud, but which have a "net impact of reducing access to the ballot," particularly for the poor. And, with the likelihood of marriage equality appearing on Oregon's 2014 ballot, it is "very important to maintain this seat in progressive hands."

If Oregon re-elects Kate Brown in November, she sees two key efforts ahead. First, recruiting and growing new business in Oregon, by opening an Office of Business Assistance, which would "go to bat" within state government to help businesses navigate regulations. She was inspired to this by learning of an artisanal food producer mired in red tape in California, which is now likely moving to Oregon, thanks to combined efforts from Oregon State University, the Department of Agriculture, the Secretary of State's Business Oregon program, and the sweet milk given by cows eating Oregon alfalfa. Second, Brown says it is time for Oregon to finally, seriously address campaign finance reform, including any required amendments to Oregon's constitution, because — sad, but true — Oregon has virtually no political spending limits whatsoever, yet. "I hope to be introducing campaign finance legislation to the legislature. It would be a challenging discussion, but I think it's time has come."

The potential combination of Kate Brown serving as Secretary of State, with State Representative Tina Kotek leading a Democratic majority in the Oregon House, promises positive, powerful change for Oregon, if Oregon voters organize to make it happen.

Who will lead the changes in Oregon and America? Brown says LGBT people should "absolutely" engage in political activism and seek political careers, because "if you're not at the table, that means you're on the menu." Her advice on getting there? "Follow your passion, whatever it may be, and find your voice. Because your ability to convey your vision and make a solid case for it is critical." Also, "find a way to make a living as a back-up. But, be prepared to step through the door when it opens, because you may only get one shot." That's what Kate Brown got, when being politically engaged led to her first political appointment. She took it, and is still running hard to make Oregon work better for everyone.

"If you see injustice in the world, you need to speak out," says Brown. "Your vote is a critical part of your voice." ■

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