



THE 2012 ELECTIONS DELIVERED UNPRECEDENTED VICTORIES FOR THE LGBT COMMUNITY.

I am filled with joy for the families in Washington, Maine and Maryland who have won the freedom to marry the person they love — and did so, for the first time ever, by a vote of the people. I am also glad for the people of Minnesota who successfully blocked a constitutional ban on marriage equality for the first time.

The list goes on: our country re-elected the first sitting president to support the freedom to marry, elected the first openly gay U.S. senator, and four new out members of the House of Representatives (including the first out person of color and first out bisexual)! In New Hampshire, the first out transgender person was elected to the state legislature.

And right here in Oregon, we championed the re-election of Secretary of State Kate Brown and Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian and helped secure a pro-equality majority in the Oregon house, where Rep. Tina Kotek will become the first-ever lesbian speaker of a statehouse.

These are a lot of firsts and there is no question that the tide has turned irrevocably toward equality — and toward the freedom to marry, in particular.

As more and more Americans are having conversations with LGBT, and allied friends and family, they're coming to realize that committed couples, whether they are gay or straight, hope to marry for similar reasons — to make a lifetime promise to share the joys and sorrows that life brings.

The victories on election night have bolstered our confidence and confirmed that we are exactly where we need to be. We know that we are on the right path. The education campaign Basic Rights Oregon has undertaken over the past three years is winning hearts and minds. And our movement has proven that we can win marriage through legislatures, in the courtrooms and, finally, at the ballot. Now is the time to begin repealing these discriminatory amendments.

We're also keenly aware that none of our victories have been a slam dunk. In Washington alone, it took over 12 million dollars and more than 30,000 volunteer hours to eke out a four-point victory — despite going into the campaign with greater public support for marriage than there currently is in Oregon. For two months, Basic Rights Oregon dedicated staff and volunteers to the campaign to run the Southwest Washington outreach. Our volunteers had thousands of conversations with Washington

voters at their doors and on their phones, accounting for 10% of the volunteer hours on the Washington campaign!

Here in Oregon we still have work to do, and we know it won't be easy. Oregon is one of 30 states with constitutional amendments banning marriage for gay and lesbian couples. Oregon stands ready to be the first state to overturn a constitutional amendment at the ballot. Basic Rights Oregon is committed to leading this effort, and our education campaign has already increased support for the freedom to marry by double digits in the past three years.

While the movement now turns to states with constitutional bans, we must also continue working at the federal level. Next year, the Supreme Court could finally overturn the federal Defense of Marriage Amendment. We cannot win only at the state or only at the federal level. Either victory would be incomplete without the other. Winning at the federal level will not provide the freedom to marry in Oregon until we change our state laws, and winning in Oregon will not provide Oregon couples with any federal recognition until DOMA is gone.

Now is the time for every fair-minded Oregonian to stand with us in order to complete this journey to the freedom to marry. We need you to GET ENGAGED today.

A November 13th *New York Times* article described how the wins on the ballot this year were achieved through “patient, labor-intensive personal dialogue.” Mainers United for Marriage, the article explained, “phoned some 250,000 residents or knocked on their doors, engaging many of them in 20-minute conversations about love, marriage and commitment and persuading some to rethink their views.”

The only way we will win the freedom to marry in Oregon is through heart-felt conversations. We must continue to have the courage and honesty to talk to friends, family and coworkers about why marriage matters for all caring and committed couples — gay or straight.

Please go to our website and sign our pledge to have 10 conversations before the end of this year with friends and family about why marriage matters to you.

In the next few weeks, we'll be on the road for a Victory tour through Oregon. We want to celebrate our victories and get to work for 2014. Look for details soon. §

Jeana Franzinni is the Executive Director of Basic Rights Oregon. For more information about Basic Rights Oregon, basicrights.org