

Staying on Message

Hanging on to our tongues.

Our Constitution is designed to protect people, not hurt them. Constitutional Amendment 36 hurts real Oregonians by putting unequal treatment for gays and lesbians in our Constitution. It would deny many families health care, inheritance rights and the ability to make life-saving medical decisions. We may disagree about social issues such as marriage, but those disagreements do not belong in our Constitution.

— Official No on Constitutional Amendment 36 Campaign Message

Rebekah stands in front of the small university classroom. She welcomes us No on Constitutional Amendment 36 Speakers Bureau volunteers to our training session. "Our polls show this is winnable if we stay on message," she tells us. While she explains the strategy to challenge Oregon's latest anti-gay attack, her fingers tug the hem of her black knit shirt over the waistband of her slacks. Like Sisyphus and his rock, she keeps at it and it keeps rolling away.



WHEN DO I GET TO CALL OUR OPPOSITION BIGOTED RIGHT-WING DOO-DOO HEADS?

"If we get our message out early, we can win." Rebekah pushes her long, dye-streaked bangs aside, another Sisyphian effort. Rebekah has a tough job. Not only does her shirt ride up and her hair fall forward, but as campaign Communications Director, this savvy young politico must convert us forty-some volunteers into on-message speakers in one short session.

Easily 20 years my junior, Rebekah reviews the *Speakers Handbook* with our group — mostly old war horses like me who have fought against (and won, by the way) Oregon's last three anti-gay initiatives. She explains how important it is to use the exact language specially crafted to reach undecided voters.

We learn to say *unequal treatment*, not *discrimination*. We learn to call proponents of Constitutional Amendment 36 *our opposition*. Am I the only one boiling inside, thinking up more accurate terms for the folks pushing a same-sex marriage ban?

Rebekah stays on message, modeling how to bring the discussion back to moving undecided voters to vote no. "Oregonians don't like amending our Constitution," she emphasizes.

This is hard. I'm eager to toss Amendment 36 onto the scrapheap of Ballot Measures 9, 13, and 9 again — the anti-gay initiatives Oregonians defeated in '92, '94 and 2000. But inside me simmers a tirade affirming gay, lesbian, bi, trans, and queer people's right to equality under the law — we have families we want to protect, too. I force myself to focus and memorize the official message.

"Now turn your desks around and practice in small groups." Rebekah tugs her shirt down and pushes her bangs aside for the hundredth time. This up-to-now attentive group of queers and our allies breaks into chatter while we scoot our wooden desks across the shiny linoleum floor.

We visit and laugh a little in this so-far humorless session. Everyone needs to let off steam. The training material is a lot to absorb. We must talk about health care, inheritance rights, and life-saving medical decisions. We aren't supposed to say it's about denying fairness, democracy, and justice for all, even though it is. We can't mention loving each other and wanting to marry our lifemates, even though we do.

This is politics — bite the bullet and say what needs to be said to win. There's no room for anything along the lines of a Dick Cheney f-word comment, which in the case of people trouncing our very humanity seems appropriate.

We sit in our desks and practice saying the message. Nobody mentions it, but everyone here knows Measure 36 is mean-spirited, stupid, and totally discriminatory, that it's based on fear and perpetuates big fat lies. I ache to protest the queer-hating narrow-mindedness of the one-man/one-woman frothing-mouthed hate-mongers, er, I mean *our opposition*. When do I get to call *our opposition* bigoted right-wing doo-doo heads? I keep that thought to myself and stay on message.

This crowd would normally be much more cheery, jovial, and — you know — gay. Unfortunately, not much is funny about putting unequal treatment into our Constitution.

The local No on Constitutional Amendment 36 campaign office is at 1615 Oak St. in Eugene. To learn more, volunteer, or make a contribution, drop by or call 344-2811. For more info see www.noon36.com, www.basicrights.org, and www.mytribeeugene.bravehost.com Writer and equality advocate Sally Sheklow teaches writing at LCC Downtown Center.

lems in unborn fetuses and young children whose brains are still developing.

Mercury goes through a process called bio-accumulation. Mercury is first released by the smokestacks of old power plants and is then absorbed by the atmosphere and spread throughout waterways across the county. As mercury makes its way up the food chain from plankton, to forage fish and then to predatory fish, it is unable to break down and is thus consumed by thousands of people who eat fish. However, it doesn't stop there, it then moves on from childbearing mothers to unborn fetuses to newborn babies through breast milk.

The EPA estimates that one in every six women have unsafe levels of mercury in their blood, which means over 630,000 babies are born each year with high levels in their bodies. It is our duty to speak up and prohibit these levels from rising.

The Bush Administration has proposed to declassify mercury as nontoxic, which will allow companies to emit six to seven times more mercury into our waterways.

It is crucial that we take a stand as a community, as a state, and as a country to stop this from happening. It is with great despair that I urge you to support me in reducing mercury pollution by writing Sen. Smith to oppose the administration's mercury pollution plan.

Aislynn Blair
Cheshire

LEARNED NAMES

Tom Linger says: "What kind of a name is 'Learned,' anyway?"

I tell thee truly, it is a Quaker name. Many of our founding fathers were Quakers; it is a good and honest estate. It was not uncommon for them to name their children after attributes that they aspired to: Prudence. Charity. Temperance. Humility. Friendship. And a couple of much longer ones that escape my memory.

Oh, and by the way, your column rocked!
Laura Minnick
Portland

KEEP HIM HONEST

AVA Eugene, the new home of Anderson Valley Advertiser?

Having another political player in our midst reminds me of Johnny Musumucki who infested Eugene politics back in the year 2001. Johnny M. considered himself a Gang leader.

Anderson comes to Eugene amid accusations he is a deceitful muckraker. Musumucki came to Eugene with a reputation founded upon a long history of deceit, but curiously was praised by a segment of Eugene's political power structure as being a savior of local government.

Sounds like Bruce and Johnny would make a good team! Johnny could use Bruce's advertiser for his next political cartoon program, and Bruce could use Johnny for his money. Or maybe their politics will clash and we will learn more details about Johnny's underlying motives for settling into Eugene's political scene!

A good down-to-earth investigator could keep quite busy in Eugene/Springfield, particularly writing about who's who, and who's used, in the realm of land development.

After reading Anderson's offbeat "Oregon, First Impressions," and some of his other writings, I'm not certain who or what he is politically. However, I did appreciate his statement "I'm not here to swap huggy bears with anybody".

Because swapping huggy bears has dominated Eugene's political scene for so many years, maybe the perspective of an outsider will help clear the air. And unlike Boonville, we have local writers like *WINK*'s Dinah; *EW*'s Pittman; and several *R-G* writers who (if ever allowed) can help keep the newcomer honest!

John Fluent
Eugene

DEFINING HAMBURGER

I am writing in response to Steve Kyte from Corvallis (8/5) who wrote that he did not like Carl's Jr. using "shock and awe" on their sign because he said it conjured up war-like images of "spattered blood and body parts" that were not pleasant to eat with his hamburger. Any vegetarian reading that was likely to notice the irony and wonder what exactly is the hamburger itself if not spattered blood and body parts? I think we as conscious citizens ought to force ourselves to think of these "unpleasant" images especially if we choose to participate in violence by buying these animal products/body parts. See www.meetyourmeat.com.

The butchers won't stop slaying unless we stop paying. If we are truly wanting to live peacefully and conscientiously, consuming a vegan diet is the best place to start as a way to make a meaningful impact (both spiritually and economically) multiple times a day. Even more impactful than boycotting Carl's Jr. — although you can do that too. Good for you. Why not?

Carrie Freeman
Eugene

IS U.N. THE ANSWER?

This letter of concern is in response to Michael Mooney's comments (8/5). I agree with your resentment of G.W. Bush. But perhaps more alarming than his shortcomings is the public's failure to recognize the U.N. for what it truly is. It is sold to the blind-sheep masses as the only means to world peace. However, a close look at its creators, policies and track record reveal these trends/facts:

- The U.N. was the global elite's offered "solution" to WWII, where their League of Nations failed after WWI.
- The U.N. thrives on problem-reaction-solution scenarios.
- The U.N. & NATO will likely be the world army which New World Order researchers warn about.
- The U.N. is designed in part to dissolve countries' sovereignty, as it seeks one world government, army and currency (digital).
- The U.N. will soon be taxing the masses for its "services."
- The U.N. is indeed a global elite front, and offers the world *nothing* except illuminati dominance.

Please Mr. Mooney, don't take my word for it. Before supporting a person or thing, investigate much deeper than the *Associated Press*. For much more detail, perhaps see David Icke's *And the Truth Shall Set You Free*.

Kevin Stacey
Eugene