

# Crushed Hopes

The passage of Measure 36 disappointed many.

BY ALEXANDRA ARCH

It would be a small ceremony, nothing extravagant. Friends and family would come to Eugene from all over the country. The reception would be good, plain fun — perhaps everybody would gather at the bowling alley or the miniature golf course. But most importantly, Kate Weber would be able to pledge her love for her spouse in front of the people she cared about most, and in turn, receive their support.

That was what she wanted, but it didn't happen that way. Weber is gay, and marriage, briefly a possibility for gay couples in Oregon, is now illegal, according to the state. The passage of Measure 36 amended the state constitution so that only marriage between one man and one woman is valid or legally recognized. A majority of Oregonians who voted (56 percent) supported the measure, and it passed in Lane County by 59 votes, according to the Oregon Secretary of State website.

For Weber and her partner, Jes Burns, the passage of Measure 36 hurt. They have a loving and supportive relationship, and Weber feels they deserve the same protection and rights as heterosexual couples. "We made sure that all the groundwork was there before making a long-term commitment," she said. "Every once in a while the topic of marriage would come up and resur-

face, especially when things were happening in Portland."

On March 3, 2004, Multnomah County began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples, in compliance with the Oregon Constitution. Weber called Burns from work to see if she wanted to drive to Portland that day and get a marriage license. They decided one afternoon wasn't enough time. They wanted to make plans, to do it right.

Besides, gay marriage seemed to be gaining the momentum of a powerful social movement, and Weber thought perhaps they could wait and marry in Lane County. She was wrong. On April 20 a judge ordered Multnomah County to stop issuing marriage licenses, even though county officials had already handed out close to 3,000.

"It is the basic right of people to be fully equal participating members of a community," said Rebekah Kassell, the communica-

tions director of Basic Rights Oregon, a gay-rights activist group and a major opponent of Measure 36. "People deserve to live in a way of life that is free of fear and violence."

## The passage of Measure 36 hurt.

Jes Burns and Kate Weber



The fight for same-sex marriage recognition is now playing itself out in the courts. The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit against the state on behalf of nine same-sex couples last spring. After several appeals, the case is now being tried in the Oregon Supreme Court.

"We are trying to create a gateway with

36 should have no effect on the previously married, same-sex couples.

For Weber, the passage of Measure 36 made her question the values of the Eugene community versus the state at large. "I was lulled into thinking it would pass by living in Eugene," she said. "It hit me harder than it would have living somewhere else."

Despite the disappointment, Weber remains hopeful for the future. "My generation is far more progressive about this issue," she said. "The information is so radically different now than my grandma's generation. It's hurtful that some people don't see me as a person that loves another person." ♥

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