

When it comes to gay rights, Oregon state Sen. Frank Morse, a vocally Christian Republican, doesn't toe the party line. Instead he bases his actions in the Legislature on personal experience, his desire to represent his constituents and his own interpretation of the Bible and its teachings. During the 2005 legislative session he co-sponsored SB 1000 to legalize civil unions and stepped right into the crossfire.

Morse admits that before he ran for office he had "tendencies of intolerance" around the issue of homosexuality. "I've held biases with respect to homosexuality that on deeper reflection, I don't think were valid," he said.

Convictions that come out of that kind of reflection have helped Morse earn the respect of his peers and colleagues, whether or not they agree with him on all the issues. "People have great confidence in Sen. Morse's integrity," said Patty Evans, pastor of Morse's church, First Christian Church in Albany. "It comes from a place of deep faith, so even those who disagree with him respect him."

Republican state Sen. Jason Atkinson, who recently announced his candidacy for governor, didn't vote for SB 1000 but has a great deal of respect for Morse's ability to build bipartisan consensus. "He's a good

Sen. Frank Morse Corvallis' maverick Republican

BY AARON BURKHALTER



friend and protected status for sexual orientation."

Some of Morse's constituents, especially Christians for whom the Bible is central when discussing homosexuality, were also critical of his decision to support the bill. "The state gave us a chance to vote for our convictions and we did," said John Breitmeyer, senior pastor at the South Albany Community Church, who opposes civil unions. "My faith community believes there is a distinction between marriage and homosexuality. One is affirmed by God and another isn't."

But Morse's convictions are also biblically rooted. "When the opposition came out so strong and the attacks on me occurred from, by and large, the faith community ... I felt very comfortable in coming forward with my own faith," Morse said.

It became a battle of conflicting Christian views and for Morse, the belief in love and acceptance is vital to Christianity. And while many openly opposed his stance, Morse has found others who were more willing to look at the issue in a different light. "I respect him for his courage to let it be known where he stands," said Dick Busic, a friend and former pastor to the Morse family. "My understanding is this comes from his understanding that God's love is for everyone."

This isn't the first time Morse has taken a sometimes unexpected stand on controversial social issues: When he ran for the Senate

'When the opposition came out so strong and the attacks on me occurred from, by and large, the faith community ... I felt very comfortable in coming forward with my own faith.' — Oregon State Sen. Frank Morse

friend of mine, and a fantastic hardworking senator," Atkinson said. "His appeal to people crosses all kinds of political issues."

But when Morse sponsored SB 1000 after voters overwhelmingly passed Measure 36 amending the Oregon Constitution to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman, many of his constituents, supporters and other Republicans questioned his actions.

In May 2005, Randy Killen, chair of the Benton County Republican Central Committee, wrote a letter that was later posted on the Benton GOP website urging Morse to withdraw his support for SB 1000. "The voters who supported Measure 36 believed that they were preserving the marriage relationship, not just the name," Killen wrote in the letter. "In our view, SB 1000 is in violation of the state Constitution as amended by Measure 36. We also see a direct conflict between protected status for reli-

in 2002 he supported civil rights for gays based on his belief that sexual orientation is determined at birth, and he also supports abortion rights. In a statement he mailed to his constituents prior to running, Morse wrote, "we are called to treat one another with dignity, respect and love."

It was during the process of clarifying his own views for himself as he prepared to run for the state Senate that the issues surrounding civil rights for gays really came home for him. Morse's wife, Laura, called her sister and read her the statement over the phone — for years, they had thought that maybe Morse's nephew (Laura's sister's son) was gay. Laura's sister "broke down and was emotionally overcome," Morse said.

"Why was that never shared?" Morse asked, rhetorically. Why, in a loving and supportive family, hadn't they openly discussed these issues? "It was, I believe a fear that Bob would not be accepted," Morse said.

The Frame House

AFFORDABLE CUSTOM FRAMING TO YOUR SPECIFICATIONS

Since 1967

Offering Art Supplies, Ready Made Frames, Framed Art

Come See Our Gallery

117 FIRST AVE. E - NEXT TO THE LYON ST. BRIDGE
IN HISTORICAL DOWNTOWN ALBANY, OREGON

(541) 928-7676

WE WANT YOU!

What's Happening Corvallis is looking for Corvallis-based writers capable of covering news, music, performing arts, politics and other topics of general interest in Corvallis. Writing experience and knowledge of AP style preferred but not required. Applicants interested in covering Corvallis and Corvallis only, send cover letter and resumé to Melissa Bearns

by email or snail mail:

melissa@eugeneweekly.com or 1251 Lincoln St., Eugene, OR, 97402.

COUPONS

50¢ OFF a 12 oz. Drink 75¢ OFF a 16 oz. Drink
\$1.00 OFF a 20 oz. Drink



Present coupon at time of purchase. Not valid with any other offer.

One coupon per visit. Excludes bottled drinks.

Expires 11.30.05 EWCE1005D



\$1.00 OFF

ANY LUNCH SPECIAL



Present coupon at time of purchase. Not valid with any other offer.

One coupon per visit. Expires 11.30.05 EWCE1005F



CORVALLIS

500 SW 2nd St.

2541 NW Monroe St.

948 NW Circle Blvd.

www.allannbroscoffee.com

EUGENE

2465 Hilyard St.

152 West 5th St.