

So Close

Tasting our rights



We were so close. We planned. We organized. We chose our outfits. The first day of Oregon's domestic partner registry was all set to be festive and meaningful. Fruit pies were donated to celebrate the fact that, even though we can't get the same rights as legally married heterosexuals, we were finally getting a piece of the pie. Nyuk nyuk.

We even had security in place in case the God Hates Fags crowd crashed our party (again). My domestic partner and I, along with hundreds of other Oregon couples, were ready to file our notarized application the moment the county courthouse opened on Jan. 2.

At long last, our relationship would be legally recognized. No more "next of kin only" rules keeping us from our partner's hospital bedside. We'd finally enjoy the same child-rearing, custody and inheritance rights as other committed couples. Call us radical, but we really would like to protect our families.

We shouldn't have to wait one day longer for our basic rights.

Then, at the eleventh hour, in swaggers a cabal of high-powered out-of-state right-wing attorneys – funded by fundamentalist evangelical megabucks – and a federal judge hurls Oregon's domestic partnership law into limbo. What the hell happened?

Watch closely, kids.

- Governor signs domestic partnership bill into law.
- Opposition gathers signatures to defer law to November 2008 ballot.
- Petitions fall 116 valid signatures short.
- Lawsuit arguing Oregon's process of validating signatures is undemocratic filed by "Christ-centered" Alliance Defense Fund (as if Jesus taught Hassle thy neighbor).
- Regardless, all 36 Oregon counties prepare to open Domestic Partner Registries on Jan 2.
- Judge rules lawsuit has merit, blocks law from going into effect pending a Feb. 1 hearing.
- Registry celebration screeches to a halt.
- Dammit. Dammit. Dammit.

What a stink bomb. Disappointed and mad as hell, we lit candles, sang songs and told our sad stories to news reporters. In private, away from the TV cameras, we wailed and gnashed and cursed to high heaven. What else can you do?

We're up against the anti-gay bloc's unshakable faith. With their twisted take on the Bible, these Energizer bunnies of bigotry are hell-bent on excluding some people from equality – no matter how just our cause, how worthy our souls, how fabulous our parades.

Faith, is it? Alrighty, then. If that's what it takes, that's what we'll bring.

We've got faith that the laws of this land will protect everyone equally. You shouldn't have to be born again to get a fair shake around here. We believe in liberty and justice for ALL. We won't back down, and we won't give up. We'll hold fast for the thousands of couples, the moms and dads, and all the little children who have no legal protection while the delay drags on. We need this law. We need it, and we'll get it. How's that for faith?

But it'll cost us. We're hiring our own hotshot legal team (to the tune of \$50,000) to defend the Family Fairness Act at the Feb. 1 hearing. With no out-of-state deep-pocket megachurch funds flowing our way, we'll have to come up with the bucks ourselves. And we will.

We've already raised over \$10,000 at our candlelight vigils in Eugene, Corvallis, Ashland, Bend, Salem, Portland and Pendleton. If you count yourself among the truth-and-fairness faithful, chip in and chip in again. Our voice will be heard.

We're marching in the streets on this one, folks. Specifically Madison Street and SW 3rd Avenue in Portland on Wednesday, Jan. 30, at 5:30 pm. Rain or shine, gay, straight or somewhere else on the continuum – it's time to show up and be counted. Make sure they hear us in the Federal Courthouse. Donate to the legal fund and sign up to attend the rally – do both online at www.basicrights.org

This is the moment where we all step up. It's time. Don't let "Jesus Camp" control Oregon's laws. A little piece of justice is within reach. It's up to you and me and all of us. We're so close.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow is legally married (in Canada) to her partner of 20 years.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the person who thinks those with kids or who "lead busy lives" can't ride bikes: Parents can (and do) cycle to school with their kids: on separate bikes, on adult-child tandem bikes or in trailers (rideyourbike.com/kids.html).

And it's insulting to suggest that people who ride bikes for transportation don't have to "accomplish multiple tasks every day."

In response to Dave Roth's fairytale letter about how things are near-perfect for bikes in Eugene: It's hilarious that the transportation planner for the city, the very person whose JOB is to make streets safer for bikes, thinks things are fine as they are and there's little work to be done (by him).

This coming from a city whose idea of improving bike safety consists of painting pictures of bicycles on a few random streets around town.

*Michelle D'Amico
Eugene*

NO CRACKS BEHIND

I would like thank the powers that are supposed to fund the road and bridge infrastructure. I think we have every chance of winning the pot-hole slalom event in the next Olympics. I suggest we give a no bid contract to the Mickey Mouse Construction and Design Co. They guarantee the lowest prices on all your spanning needs whether crossing a river or a pedestrian dance way. Act now and get their double cross two for the price of one special. By eliminating the middle span, I mean, man, we can pass the savings on to you. Remember our motto:

"There will be no cracks left behind as far as the eye can see."

*Vince Loving
Eugene*

SUPPORT ALTERNATIVES

I am sure that many progressive *EW* readers are shocked at the gullibility of so many of our fellow citizens for buying President Bush's war justifications for what is obviously about greed and power. Yet you equally uncritically buy Nancy Willard's claim (1/3) that her war against alternative schools is because she cares about poor families. Her behavior is so mean-spirited and abusive that she was banned from entering the Adams School building.

Abusing the alternative schools is a cowardly, insensitive way to deal with the real culprits — underfunding of our schools and

the need for better parenting skills in some of our needier families. Alternative and neighborhood schools coexisted peacefully for decades until the school district stood by and allowed Willard to poison the atmosphere.

Others picked this up, and suddenly alternative and neighborhood schools can no longer coexist. Cruel, but brilliant. Whether one views the alternative school families as elitist, these are real people with real feelings. They have been treated insensitively and people have gotten hurt. Was this necessary?

Now Willard is turning her attention on screwing the charter schools. As a charter school parent, I've been expecting this for years. That's why she not so subtly suggested kicking one of the charter schools out of the Willard building and replacing it with Eastside. Please wake up, Eugene. Willard's agenda has nothing to do with children's welfare!

*Ken Rosemarin
Eugene*

ANOTHER GLUE-SNIFFER

Your article "Kicker Costs are Hidden" (1/3) pushes people in the wrong direction for understanding the finances of Oregon.

Fact: 33 percent of all taxes go to pay for PERS. That means every government budget for schools, etc, pays 33 percent of it's budget on average to PERS. Lane County owes approximately \$100 million and the Springfield School District owes \$62.5 million. The state is paying \$270 million in interest to support PERS. The 2007 Report from Moody's verifies that net tax supported debt is up more than 300 percent in the last 5 years.

Getting some of our money back is evil? The PERS debt at the local levels could have been offset by forward contracting or hedging, which was verified by State Economist Michael Kennedy. They chose not to [do] that, and instead they shifted that cost off to the children and their families. The same with Lane County. They also failed to forward their gas costs; a loss of \$5 million for each entity, once again financial incompetence shifted to the taxpayer and their families.

If you're going to make a statement about slashing money for schools, health care, and other vital services, you need to understand the real costs. The abolition of private prop-



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