

To the Altar? Not so Fast

OREGON HAS A SHADY HISTORY OF OPPOSING **LGBT EQUALITY**

By Shannon Finnell

You think you know a state — and Oregon, with its crunchy granola public-access beaches and the fewest abortion restrictions in the nation, should be known for protecting its gay and lesbian residents as well, right?

Not so much. According to Sasha Buchert, formerly of Basic Rights Oregon and now a staff attorney at the Transgender Law Center, Oregon holds the record as the state with the most anti-gay ballot measures in its history. The Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest put that number at 35. And Springfield, that sweet little city to Eugene's east, was the first place in the U.S. to put anti-gay language in its city charter back in May 1992.

Springfield's charter amendment, which prohibited

the city from "promoting homosexuality" and banned anti-discrimination policies based on sexual orientation, passed with 55.4 percent of the vote. It was introduced by the Oregon Citizens Alliance, a right-wing Christian organization active in the late '80s and '90s. Other municipalities, including Creswell, Junction City, Cottage Grove, Oakridge and counties such as Linn and Douglas followed suit, but a statewide measure failed in November 1992. The Supreme Court decision *Romer vs. Williams* struck down all of the Oregon municipalities' anti-discrimination legislation.

Oregon holds the record as the state with the most anti-gay ballot measures in its history.

Buchert says that the anti-gay politics of the early '90s, when so many bigoted ballot measures passed, could be especially burdensome to people living away from LGBT support systems of metropolitan areas. "It's really difficult to walk out your door and see signs attacking who you are," she says. "It was a huge challenge for folks at that time living in those areas."

Christine Lundberg, Springfield's mayor since 2011, lived in Springfield during the days of the Oregon Citizens Alliance campaign, but as a busy young mother, Lundberg says she wasn't as politically involved back then. "I remember the controversy," she says. "I was sorry to see [the amendment] passed."

But Lundberg says that supporting equal rights has always seemed in line with Springfield's values, so she's not surprised to hear that a lot of Springfield residents support Oregon United for Marriage's ballot measure for marriage equality in 2014. Lundberg adds that sometimes Springfield is tainted with a reputation that isn't accurate. "We're a much more welcoming community than stereotypes say," she says.

Buchert says that Oregon's record for most of the anti-gay ballot measures probably doesn't set the state apart as some sort of evil pariah. "I think it was the political

work of one organization that tried to use Oregon as a testing ground for the rest of the country to develop this anti-gay rhetoric and prey upon people's fears and misunderstanding of who gay and lesbian people are," she says.

For the city with the nation's first anti-gay language in its charter to have a mayor who supports marriage equality is a sign that times are changing for the better, Buchert says.

Lundberg says it's friendship that shows her that speaking out for basic rights is important: "I have several friends who are gay and in love, and I just look at them and think, 'Why would I stand in their way of being married?'"



Wedding Photography
by Anthony Proveaux
- 541 - 603 - 6149 -
www.anthonyprouveaux.com

Includes Rights to Images Professional - Affordable - Experienced Shot over 400 Weddings

Celebrate ANY and ALL
Unions, Commitments,
Weddings, Births, Ceremonies,
Announcements

Call 484-0519 or email
office@eugeneweekly.com

EUGENE Weekly

Professional Sound Systems, LED Lighting & Video Projection Rentals
Perfect solutions for celebrations of all sizes!
Create a memorable experience for your guests with one of our simple, high-quality & affordable A/V packages.

Call us for technical consulting or recommendations for your big day.

Sound Systems, Big & Small
Video Projectors & Screens • Wireless Microphones
LED & Effects Lighting • Deliveries & Setups
Media Duplication & Printing
Wedding Packages Available

PsV 

Pro Sound & Video prosoundandvideo.net
541.485.5252



Sweet Life
pâtisserie

artistic
creative
stylish
original
custom
decadant
delicious
gorgeous
hand crafted
fresh

541.683.5676
sweetlifedesserts.com
www.facebook/SweetLifePatisserie