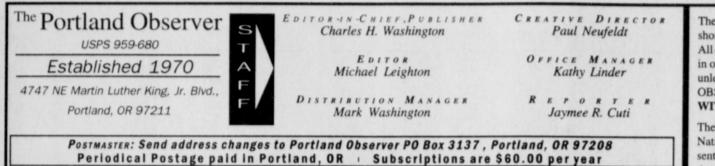
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## **Civil Unions are Not Enough**

#### Full citizenship must convey right to marry BY MAYOR VERA KATZ

I am someone who, throughout my public career, has championed the dignity of all people, including gay men and lesbian women.

Human dignity requires that we be who we are, and that we be accepted for who we are. All of us should have the right to live in the

The right to marry conveys full citizenship. At the federal level alone, there are more than one thousand benefits that married couples enjoy, which those in a civil union could not access.

light of day.

We know that throughout history there have been gay and lesbian couples. This is not something new

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www.pcc.edu or call 503.977.4519 - Mayor Vera Katz What is new is that over the past

50 years, we have become more enlightened as a society. Old barriers around the issues of race, ethnicity, or gender have crumbled. It was only in 1967, for example, that the Supreme Court struck down laws that prohibited interracial marriage. It is now time that the barrier to the right of two consenting adults to marry also comes down.

Surveys show most Americans support the concept of civil unions. Even President Bush implied recently that states should be free to sanction civil unions.

It is now a widely held belief that every adult ought to have the right to determine who is the beneficiary of their insurance, who has the right to visit them in a hospital, or who should be in the position to make end-of-life decisions.

But civil unions are not enough. It still implies second-class citizenship. The right to marry conveys full

citizenship. At the federal level alone, there are more than one thousand benefits that married couples enjoy, which those in a civil union could not access.

efits and rights misses a larger point. Marriage is far more than a business arrangement. It is a covenant of love, the promise of two people who pledge to remain faithful to each other for a lifetime.

Marriage is the place where we create a home for children - and gay men and lesbian women have children and throughout history have had children. Those children have the right to be raised within the loving confines of a marriage, not within an ambiguously named civil union.

In a world where we worry that promiscuity is rampant, why would we not embrace those who are pledging fidelity?

In a world racked with instability, why would we not embrace those who seek permanence?

In a world where we worry about a lack of commitment, why would we not embrace those building a lifetime of devotion?

The action taken by Multnomah County commissioners puts a human face - the face of our sons and daughters, our friends and neighbors - on the issue of same-gender marriage.

These faces, beaming as they promise to love, honor and cherish the one person they have chosen to spend their lives with, show that we have nothing to fear from this expansion of marriage. Rather, there is much to love.

Vera Katz is the mayor of Portland and a long-time activist so-But to talk only of financial ben- cial justice and civil rights.

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BY JUDGE

**GREG MATHIS** 

### **Gun Makers Run for Cover**

We must be vigilant in fighting for gun accountability

chokehold on Washington D.C. and state capitals throughout the country, gun makers and The National Rifle Association who do their bidding, experienced a rare of guns. loss recently.

The U.S. Senate was forced to abandon efforts to pass legislation which would have protected gun manufacturers from lawsuits by crime victims. They were forced to retreat after 12 Republican Senators decided to join Democrats in calling for an extension on the assault weapons ban and background checks on gun purchasers at gun shows, as a condition of passing the gun maker protection bill.

Instead of compromising, the gun lobbyists decided to withdraw and reload, perhaps for next year. Rest assure they have not given up on their effort to protect gun makers. Indeed this is just the latest effort to protect gun manufacturers from being sued by victims of gun violence, cities and organizations who want manufacturers to be held liable when they negligently distribute guns into the wrong hands.

The NAACP, Chicago, and other cities have sued gun manufacturers because of the death and car- and a national board member of nage that assault weapons and handguns have caused in Conference.

After years of exercising a America's inner cities. Certainly, if tobacco companies can be held liable for diseases and deaths caused by smoking, gun makers should be liable for the negligent distribution

Why then are some elected officials fighting to protect gun makers instead of fighting to protect the lives of the citizens they represent? Well, like most legislation in Washington, the lobbyists and corporations who spend the most time and money in Washington usually get what they ask for. That's why they defeat of the legislation is such a great victory, albeit temporary.

We must be as vigilant in fighting for gun accountability as the NRA and the gun manufacturers are in protecting the sale of assault weap-1 ons. AK47 rifles and MAC 10 machine guns continue to kill thousands of inner city youth each year. These guns have no place in society. You can't even hunt animals with them because the bullets would shred the kill. We must call and write our Federal elected officials and let them know we expect them to protect voters and not gun makers.

Judge Greg Mathis is chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board the Southern Christian Leadership

