

OPINION

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The Portland Observer

USPS 959-680

Established 1970

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,
Portland, OR 97211

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Postmaster: Send address changes to Portland Observer PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208
Periodical Postage paid in Portland, OR. Subscriptions are \$60.00 per year

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Couragous Commissioners

Decision to afford marriage equality shows leadership

A Portland Observer editorial: Multnomah County Commissioners are to be commended for their couragous stand to give same-sex couples equal protection under the law.

Like civil rights leaders of many generations ago, Diane Linn, Lisa Naito, Serena Cruz and Maria Rojo de Steffey are standing up for a minority population and making people

think about their own prejudices in laws that treat people differently.

The right of gay couples to marry is vitally important to many because only marriage provides the same full legal protections to same-sex couples and their families as are afforded to opposite-sex couples. Marriage offers more than 1,000 federal and 500 state legal protection and rights, such as hospital visitation rights, inherit-

ance rights and security protections for their children.

While Oregon Attorney General Hardy Myers said current Oregon law makes same-sex marriage illegal, he agrees that banning the practice probably violates the Oregon constitution which requires equality for all classes of people.

Even Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski, while wanting to stop

the marriages until the Oregon Supreme Court decides the issue, still supports equality for gay couples. The governor said he would not support putting discrimination in the state constitution or federal constitution.

Multnomah County Commissioners are on the right side of the issue, showing leadership for advancing equality for all people.

Vital Housing Vouchers Face Budget Axe

Administration's 'Section 8' cuts would sting



By IAN SLINGERLAND

The budget proposal by the Bush Administration would slash funding for the most significant source of affordable housing subsidy, "Section 8" housing vouchers, by more than a \$1 billion and create even deeper cuts in the years ahead.

The Section 8 Housing Voucher program is the nation's principal low-income housing assistance program and currently assists two million low-income households, primarily low-income working families, seniors and people with disabilities. The program currently assists approximately 31,600 families in Oregon.

The voucher proposal in this administration's budget represents a shameful retreat from our federal government's role in providing for the basic welfare and security of our communities.

The President's proposes a new "flexible voucher program," but it would allow housing authorities

to change rent structures and charge families much higher rents than currently allowed, and it would allow local housing authorities to abandon the program targets that guide assistance to the most needy of our neighbors.

Locally, there is growing recognition that investment in affordable housing reaps many rewards. At a time when we need to commit more resources to a overburdened affordable housing system, the Bush administration is moving our country in opposite direction.

Ian Slingerland represents Affordable Housing NOW, a movement of affordable housing advocates and tenants whose goals are to secure new resources for affordable housing for low income people in the Portland area and to build a movement large enough to make affordable housing funding a political priority.

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Letters to the Editor

Kidney Failure Impacts

It's important to be aware that kidney failure is on the rise and the disease goes hand-in-hand with obesity-related diabetes and high blood pressure. People of color are particularly at risk.

The Multicultural Kidney Education Program unites adults and youth in preventing kidney disease. Guided by volunteers and health care professionals, youth groups in schools and after-school programs develop a teaching tool for kidney health. The program also prepares youth, ranging from 14 to 21, to share this information with their families and communities.

There are plenty of ways we can all work together to promote kidney health and fight back against this epidemic disease.

For more information and how to get involved go to www.mikeprogram.org.
Dr. Cheryl Neal, North Plains

Ad Offends Arab Americans

A Bush/Cheney reelection campaign ad that outlines positions on taxes and challenges Sen. John Kerry's position on the Patriot Act, makes a reference to terror and terrorists while flashing a picture of a Middle-Eastern appearing male.

This ad undercuts the message the President issued to the Nation after Sept. 11 and negatively stereotypes Arabs. By using an unidentifiable, but Arab looking young male while the word terrorist is heard, the message is unmistakable and regrettable. It can only create fear and suspicion and should be changed immediately.

James Zogby, Arab American Institute president



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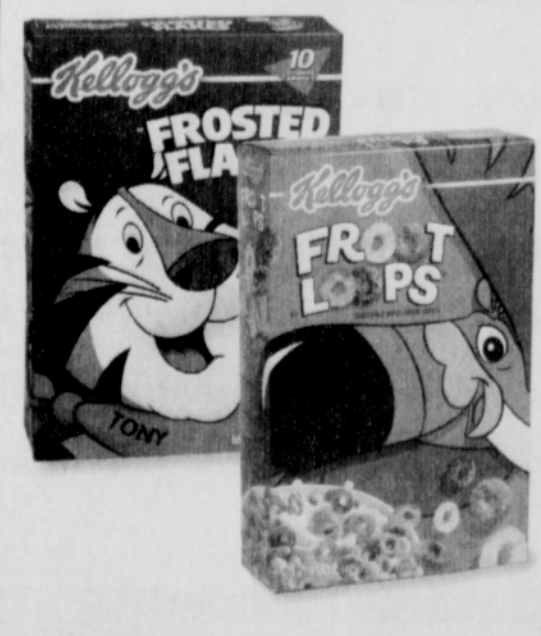
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