

# OPINION

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## Letter to the Editor

### Price of Two Terms

Two terms of Republican rule are bringing us a continual war with no end in sight, the highest gas prices in history, the highest federal deficit in history, elimination of Social Security and lifetime appointments of judges who oppose abortion, minimum wage, pollution restrictions and a citizen's right to privacy.

There's more, but isn't that enough? Just say no to extremist judges and down with George Bush II!

Jason DeSanto  
Southeast Portland

### Stand Up for Rights

For more than 30 years, Oregonians who care about fairness and equality for all Oregon citizens have asked the state to pass legislation making it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation. There comes a time when it is no longer acceptable to be politically cautious or cavalier about doing the right thing-and that time is now.

It is now time for lawmakers to show the leadership and courage we expect of our representatives in the legislature by protecting all Oregon's families including same-sex couples and our families with civil union legislation and banning discrimination based on sexual orientation throughout the state. Oregon's promise of fairness and equality for all of its citizens stand strong, even today with a nationally hostile political arena. It is time for Oregon to stand strong for all Oregon families.

After a painful and divisive campaign season, we now have an enormous opportunity to find common ground. Most Oregonians-even those who voted yes on Measure 36-believe that discrimination is wrong. Those very same voters believe that same-sex couples have the right to legal recognition of their families and their children. To squander this opportunity would be shameful and at odds with Oregon's fundamental values.

It's time for Oregon lawmakers and all Oregonians to do the right and civil thing. Right now.

Karen Wells  
Northeast Portland



## Change Schools from the Inside

### Finance teaching over testing

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

At a recent gathering sponsored by the National Governors Association, the world's richest man took state leaders to task on failing high schools throughout the country.

Bill Gates stated that America's high schools are leaving students unprepared for both college and today's jobs market. Gates didn't just talk the talk: He pledged \$15 million to states that take significant

steps to improve their high schools.

The Governors Association responded by pledging to increase standards and high stakes testing at high schools-the same solution offered by the Bush Administration. Unfortunately, there was no pledge to make significant changes inside the classroom, where classes are overcrowded and students are under taught. Somehow testing and standards seems to be more important than instruction and classroom changes.

Numerous studies have indicated that smaller class sizes and teacher retraining are the most necessary changes for improved student progress. We know the kids are failing, we don't need more testing to show that our schools are falling behind. We need more resources given to assist schools with teacher training and smaller classes.

In a recent report by the U.S. Department of Education, unqualified teachers was the primary reason given after 50 percent of the nation's high school seniors were unable to pass the basic skills test on the subject of history. The report also indicated that over half of junior and senior high school students have history teachers that neither



*'We need more resources given to assist schools with teacher training and smaller classes.'*

- Judge Greg Mathis

major nor minored in the subject in college.

Colorado Gov. Roy Romer proposed replacing large high schools with smaller ones that can provide students with more individualized attention. The idea of smaller high schools has proven to increase student performance. In the last five years, the Gates Foundation has invested \$7.33 million dollars towards the construction of new, smaller high schools and improvements in existing ones. Clearly, Bill Gates knows something about increasing education performance and is willing to put his money where his mouth is.

If the Governors would follow his lead, we can perhaps stem the tide of failing high schools. One governor at the meeting must have been listening to Bill Gates. Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm announced last week a program to

provide zero-interest loans to school districts that will build new high schools with no more than 500 students.

The schools would focus on students who are performing poorly in the larger school settings. Granholm is also seeking help from foundations for assistance with operating expenses. Hopefully, the other governors will join in this effort to prepare high school students for success by taking a more innovative approach to instruction. All the testing and increased standards that our students are being subjected to won't do any good if we fail to give them the resources necessary to improve their test scores.

Judge Greg Mathis is chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

## Injustice to Loving Couples

BY MAYOR TOM POTTER

The Oregon Supreme Court's decision invalidating Multnomah County's same sex marriages is sad not just for Oregonians, but for anyone who values individual dignity and the absolute right of two people to share their love with their families, their friends and their community.

To deny two people the basic legal rights that every American in a loving, committed relationship enjoys simply because of their gender is a slap at the

core moral values that shaped our country, and a denial of our collective humanity.

On a personal note, I am especially saddened for my daughter, Katie. As a Portland police officer, she has put her life on the line to protect our community. Katie and her partner, Pam, married last March, with their two little girls watching. Now, I wonder, who will protect Katie and her family?

I know that the governor is pushing for legislation that will allow same sex couples to

form civil unions that would give them many of the same rights available to heterosexual married couples. This is a good-if-imperfect first step.

And I know that in time, our laws will catch up with the goodness that is in the hearts of so many. It was only 38 years ago that people of different races were allowed to marry. Time will heal this injustice as well.

Tom Potter is the mayor of Portland and a former Portland police chief.

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