

Gay man wishes he had straight male friends



DEAR ABBY
ADVICE

DEAR ABBY: I am a 47-year-old gay man. I'm well-educated, but there's something I can't figure out. Why do straight guys not want to be friends? I never hit on them, I enjoy a lot of the same pastimes like games, working on cars, etc. I want to be transparent, but when I tell them upfront, they disappear.

Sometimes it gets back to me that they thought I was asking them on a date if I invited someone to go to a ballgame, for example. I have plenty of female

friends, but what I really want is a male best friend or, hell, just a male friend, period.

Of course, everyone has their own opinions on what I should do — "join a meeting, a group, social activities and blah blah." I have done all of those things, and I can't figure out what's wrong. I have now learned to just keep my mouth shut and not invite anyone to do anything.

Any suggestions would be welcomed, but I have pretty much tried everything, including seeing a counselor. — **CURIOUS IN OKLAHOMA**

DEAR CURIOUS: The problem you're having with straight men may be that they are nervous about being perceived as "gay by association" if they

are friendly with you. Some may also find the concept of being friends with a gay man to be threatening.

Taking part in group activities and outings is certainly a way to connect with others regardless of sexual orientation. Eventually, you'll meet people and form friendships. In the meantime, appreciate those female friends of yours and ask them for some input, too.

DEAR ABBY: This has been a rough pandemic for all of us. We have all experienced the constant fear of disease, job loss and the pressure to react to those stresses in prescribed ways that aren't always easy. For those of us who deal with mental health issues on the best of days, it has

become a real struggle.

I have a group of friends who have not managed to do well through it all. Previous issues multiplied, and their lives have become pitiable messes. Early on in the pandemic, we attempted to keep moods up with weekly Zoom hangouts. It helped a little, but because my mental status has always been a little better than theirs, I was never a focus of support.

As the world has begun to open up, we have been able to see each other in person, and it has become obvious to me that I need to distance myself from them to protect what I have worked so hard to maintain. Do I owe them an explanation about why I cannot be with them?

I worry that pointing out that things are not good would drag them down further.

These are people I have known for decades, but I don't have the energy to act as emotional support for them anymore. I'd like to leave them in the best shape I can. What should I say to them? — **CARING FRIEND IN THE EAST**

DEAR CARING FRIEND: Be less available when you are contacted. When you do, your excuse should be truthful. Say you need time to yourself to work on your own mental health issues and therefore will be less available. You do not have to apologize for it, nor should you feel guilty for taking care of yourself.

BOLI

Continued from Page B1

Portland employee rights attorney Christina Stephenson, who had unsuccessfully run for the House and Multnomah County Democratic Party chair, filed the day after Kulla.

On the last day to file for office, former Rep. Cheri Helt, R-Bend, jumped into the race.

Rounding out the field are Cornelius forest management businessman Aaron Baca, Aloha banker Brent Barker, Oregon City truck driver Chris Henry, and Greenhorn laborer Robert Neuman.

If one can win more than 50% of the vote in the May 17 primary election, the race is over — there would be no run-off in November. With seven candidates and three with political track records, it's a longshot that the final winner won't be determined in the Nov. 7 general election.

The BOLI job is part workplace referee, part civil rights enforcer, part job training promoter, part government information desk and complaint box.

There's a \$31 million budget for the office — not a lot by state government standards. The job pays \$77,000 — less than the \$98,600 the governor makes and barely twice the \$32,839 paid state lawmakers for their officially part-time jobs.

Unlike other offices, it hasn't been a springboard to

bigger things. Incumbents have run for governor, U.S. Senator, Oregon Supreme Court Justice, and secretary of state. None has won.

The three most active candidates have been Helt, Kulla and Stephenson.

Cheri Helt

A restaurateur in Bend, Helt served about 10 years on school boards, and two years in the Oregon House representing Bend.



Helt

Helt is a remnant of a vanishing political species that once dominated state politics: the moderate Republican.

Elected to the House from a Democratic-leaning district in 2018, Helt often bumped heads with the GOP caucus — sponsoring legislation for mandatory vaccinations for school children that was opposed by Republicans. When the House GOP caucus walked out to deny a quorum to consider a controversial carbon cap bill,



Kulla

Helt was the only one of 22 Republicans who remained in Salem.

After losing her 2020 reelection bid to now Rep. Jason Kropf, D-Bend, Helt's focus was on maintaining her family business and employees during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Looking to return to public office, Helt felt she was a good match for the politically moderate electorate in the newly aligned 5th Congressional District. She could win a general election, but winning a closed primary against opponents who are avidly

pro-Trump and supported by vaccine skeptics seemed unlikely.

Hoyle's decision to drop her reelection bid for BOLI was an opportunity.

"I liked that BOLI was nonpartisan," Helt said. "It fits my experience well. I've been a business owner for 18 years. We've had 103 employees. BOLI has 120. No other candidate has run a business with over 100 employees."

Helt said she'd seen the ups and downs of career and technical training programs as a school board member. She praised Hoyle for realigning programs to better fit with real world job demands in Oregon. Her time in the Legislature gave her a view on how workplace law evolves.

"The office takes all of my hats and combines them into one," Helt said.

Helt rejects the label of conservative in the race, but wants to bring an open and pragmatic approach to the job.

"The job is to uphold the civil rights of all Oregonians," Helt said. "It has to be a fair process and a balanced process. Part of the job is ensuring that everybody knows the rules. This shouldn't be a 'gotcha' agency. I think most employers want to do the right thing. But for the bad actors, I'll enforce the law."

Casey Kulla

Kulla was the first candidate to sign up for the 2022 Democratic primary for governor when the window to file opened last autumn.

But as more candidates entered the race, the Yamhill County commissioner saw money and attention among Democrats focused on former House Speaker

Tina Kotek, D-Portland, state Treasurer Tobias Read, and, before he was ruled ineligible because of residency requirements, New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof.

In mid-January, Kulla switched to run for BOLI. With Hoyle running for Congress, Kulla was briefly the clear frontrunner.

Kulla says the labor commissioner's top priority is ensuring the civil and working rights of workers and people seeking housing are protected.

The commissioner's office has to be a place that proactively gets out information to workers that business owners don't make the rules — and BOLI is a place to get information and if necessary, seek help to resolve disputes.

"But first, they need to know that BOLI exists," Kulla said. "It doesn't matter if there are rules if people don't know about them and who enforces them."

Kulla said relations between businesses and workers that come to BOLI don't have to always be adversarial. As one of the first cannabis licensees in the state, Kulla took part in creating the rules and regulations that would guide the legal marijuana business into the future. Both the state and the growers shared expertise and dispelled inaccurate information.

"It was a great example of the regulators and the regulated listening to each other and finding solutions that worked," Kulla said.

Oregon's economy and workforce are rapidly evolving, Kulla said, with areas such as gig workers and farm workers whose jobs don't fit easily into

existing definitions of jobs. BOLI needs to keep both workers and operators in these areas up to date with changes in the the rule.

On technical job training, Kulla said he wants to see more cooperation with Oregon employers so that the students who commit to the programs as a path to their post-high school or community college working lives don't just end up with a certificate.

"There has to be a clear path to real jobs at the end," he said.

Christina Stephenson

The day after Kulla filed for BOLI, he was followed by Christina Stephenson, a Democrat and employee rights attorney.

Stephenson has won the backing of at least 21 labor union groups, including the AFL-CIO, AFSCME, Teamsters, along with political action committees for Planned Parenthood and Pro Choice Oregon. She's been endorsed by Hoyle, and four former BOLIs. Political backers include U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, former Gov. Barbara Roberts, House Speaker Dan Rayfield, DeFazio, and eight current state lawmakers, along with several local officeholders.

Stephenson says she's had a front row seat to the shortcomings of labor law in Oregon.

"My job has been representing workers getting a raw deal for employers who aren't following the rules," Stephenson said.

Stephenson said BOLI needs to be a resource for both employers and employees so that they know what's right and wrong from the start.

"The law is complicated," she said. "There are a number of different tests — civil rights vs. wage and hour laws, workers compensation, unemployment. Both sides are probably unsure of where they stand. BOLI's role is to help everyone understand rights and responsibilities."

Stephenson said the gig economy in which business consider themselves middlemen between customers and contracted workers will be a challenge to define in labor law. So will the evolving status of farm workers.

"It's up to the Legislature to make the laws," she said.

That may mean taking a step like California to legally define the status of gig workers as employees or something else.

"What everyone wants and needs is clarity and simplicity," Stephenson said.

BOLI's role in job and technical training is to align students as early as middle school to know their options. Programs have to match employers' needs. The result has to be good jobs that pay a living wage.

Stephenson said she was proud of the support she's received from organized labor, but that didn't mean she would come into the job in an adversarial stance to business.

"Quality jobs, fair housing, fair wages, should all be pretty non-controversial issues," she said. "Our good employers don't want these bad actors breaking the law. It puts them at a competitive disadvantage when someone else is making money through wage theft."

weather

TONIGHT	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON
Partly cloudy	Rain and drizzle	A few showers	Morning snow showers	A little rain
Baker City 36 Comfort Index™ 10	62 29 9	46 27 0	41 22 0	43 25 0
La Grande 48 Comfort Index™ 10	60 35 8	45 30 0	43 30 0	47 30 1
Enterprise 44 Comfort Index™ 10	61 29 9	40 25 0	39 24 0	43 30 0

Comfort Index takes into account how the weather will feel based on a combination of factors. A rating of 10 feels very comfortable while a rating of 0 feels very uncomfortable.

ALMANAC

TEMPERATURES	Baker City	La Grande	Elgin
High Tuesday	45°	48°	49°
Low Tuesday	24°	29°	34°
PRECIPITATION (inches)			
Tuesday	Trace	0.00	0.02
Month to date	0.04	0.08	0.11
Normal month to date	0.13	0.29	0.40
Year to date	0.71	2.46	7.30
Normal year to date	2.19	4.91	8.26

AGRICULTURAL INFO.

HAY INFORMATION FRIDAY	
Lowest relative humidity	35%
Afternoon wind	WNW at 8 to 16 mph
Hours of sunshine	10.9
Evapotranspiration	0.13

RESERVOIR STORAGE (through midnight Wednesday)

Phillips Reservoir	10% of capacity
Unity Reservoir	67% of capacity
Owyhee Reservoir	42% of capacity
McKay Reservoir	73% of capacity
Wallowa Lake	38% of capacity
Thief Valley Reservoir	94% of capacity

STREAM FLOWS (through midnight Tuesday)

Grande Ronde at Troy	3700 cfs
Thief Valley Reservoir near North Powder	1 cfs
Burnt River near Unity	4 cfs
Umatilla River near Gibbon	360 cfs
Minam River at Minam	349 cfs
Powder River near Richland	43 cfs

TUESDAY EXTREMES

NATION (for the 48 contiguous states)	
High: 101°	Zapata, Texas
Low: 10°	Dakota Hill, Colo.
Wettest: 4.48"	Hattiesburg, Miss.
OREGON	
High: 58°	Eugene
Low: 19°	Crater Lake
Wettest: 0.19"	McMinnville

WEATHER HISTORY

Lightning struck an oil refinery on April 7, 1926, at San Luis Obispo, Calif. The resulting fire lasted five days, scorched 900 acres and burned more than 6 million barrels of oil.

SUN & MOON

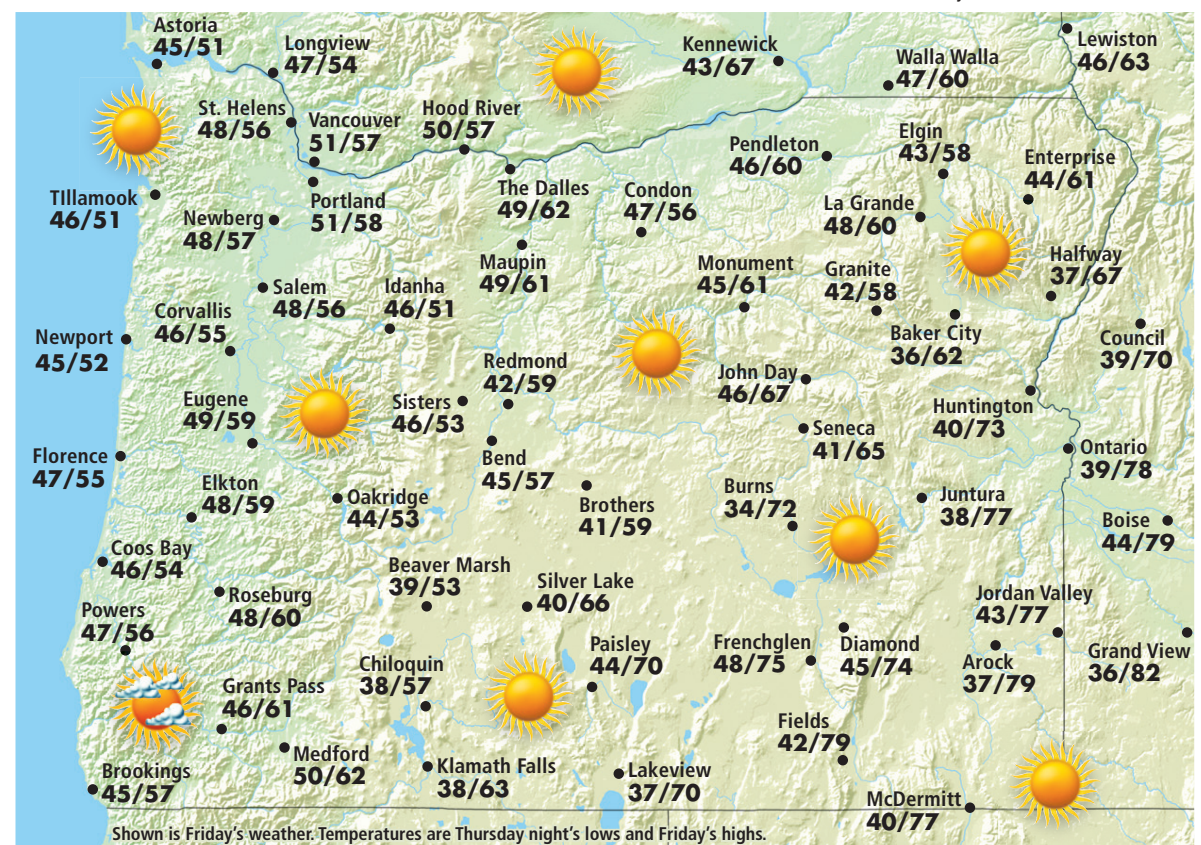
	THU.	FRI.
Sunrise	6:22 a.m.	6:20 a.m.
Sunset	7:28 p.m.	7:29 p.m.
Moonrise	9:51 a.m.	10:41 a.m.
Moonset	1:35 a.m.	2:29 a.m.

MOON PHASES



AROUND OREGON AND THE REGION

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2022



REGIONAL CITIES

City	FRI. HI/Lo/W	SAT. HI/Lo/W	City	FRI. HI/Lo/W	SAT. HI/Lo/W
Astoria	51/41/sh	49/37/r	Lewiston	63/40/pc	52/34/sh
Bend	57/31/c	45/31/c	Longview	54/40/sh	47/39/r
Boise	79/34/c	51/30/pc	Meacham	58/33/pc	43/30/pc
Brookings	57/42/pc	55/40/s	Medford	62/38/c	56/35/pc
Burns	72/23/c	48/20/pc	Newport	52/40/sh	49/37/r
Coos Bay	54/33/sh	52/42/sh	Olympia	52/38/c	50/34/r
Corvallis	55/38/sh	52/36/r	Ontario	78/39/pc	58/34/pc
Council	70/31/pc	46/24/c	Pasco	68/41/c	59/37/pc
Elgin	58/34/sh	43/29/pc	Pendleton	60/35/c	51/33/pc
Eugene	59/41/sh	53/38/r	Portland	58/41/sh	51/40/r
Hermiston	64/39/c	55/36/pc	Powers	56/42/sh	52/40/r
Hood River	57/42/r	49/39/r	Redmond	59/31/c	45/29/sh
Imnaha	69/37/pc	46/30/pc	Roseburg	60/43/sh	53/40/c
John Day	67/29/sh	44/26/pc	Salem	56/39/sh	51/39/r
Joseph	61/29/c	40/24/c	Spokane	59/32/c	49/29/pc
Kennewick	67/39/c	57/38/pc	The Dalles	62/44/pc	54/41/r
Klamath Falls	63/25/pc	47/22/s	Ukiah	56/29/c	40/25/r
Lakeview	70/25/c	48/18/s	Walla Walla	60/39/c	51/33/sh

Weather(W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice

RECREATION FORECAST FRIDAY

Location	Forecast	High	Low
ANTHONY LAKES	Cooler	42	16
PHILLIPS LAKE	A.p.m. shower	60	30
MT. EMILY REC.	Showers around	48	25
BROWNLEE RES.	A.p.m. shower	71	35
EAGLE CAP WILD.	Rain and snow	48	20
EMIGRANT ST. PARK	Rain and drizzle	51	27
WALLOWA LAKE	Cooler in the p.m.	61	29
MCKAY RESERVOIR	Cooler	58	35
THIEF VALLEY RES.	Showers around	62	29
RED BRIDGE ST. PARK	Rain and drizzle	60	35