

Some Major Dates in Oregon LGBTQ History

By George T. Nicola

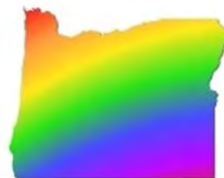
Last updated November 24, 2017



The following are, by date, a number of events that have been important in Oregon LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) history. These are certainly not all the events, but a few major ones which we know for certain occurred on a specific date.

I am not an attorney. If you believe you are the victim of discrimination based on your sexual orientation or your gender identity, please contact the Oregon Bureau of Labor's Civil Rights Division through http://www.oregon.gov/boli/CRD/Pages/C_Crcompl.aspx.

To give feedback on this article, please contact GLAPN at info@glapn.org





The article that helped launch Oregon's LGBTQ movement. For details, see

<http://glapn.org/6130nicolagaymovement.html>

February 7, 1970

John Wilkinson, a gay staff member of the *Willamette Bridge* newspaper, writes an article suggesting that gay Portlanders should organize something like the gay liberation fronts recently started in other cities. He asks for response from the community and gets numerous replies.

March 24, 1970

John Wilkinson holds the first meeting of the Portland Gay Liberation Front. Dozens of gay men and lesbians attend.

The event represents the birth of Oregon's LGBTQ movement. John is joined in his organizational work by lesbian Holly Hart, and by Dave Davenport who soon becomes John's life partner and later his husband.



Top photo: John Wilkinson and Dave Davenport.
Bottom: Holly Hart.

<http://glapn.org/6047WilkinsonInterview.html>

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Stevie Remington was Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Oregon when her group lobbied the state's Legislative Assembly for the criminal code revision.



Governor Tom McCall signed into law the criminal code revision.

January 1, 1972

Oregon's criminal code revision takes effect, eliminating provisions that have made most types of adult, private, consensual, non-commercial homosexual conduct illegal.

(<http://glapn.org/6012MilestonesLGBTQLaw.html>)

January 18, 1973



Peggy Burton

A U.S. District Court rules that the firing of Oregon public school teacher Peggy Burton based on her lesbianism was "wrongful".

It awards her \$10,000 in damages, plus a modest amount of attorney fees. However, the court refuses to reinstate her to her old position, on the grounds that reinstatement would not work in the small town where she had taught.



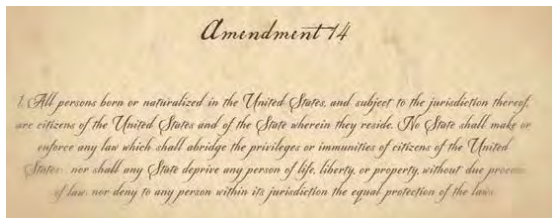
Burton's gay attorney
Charlie Hinkle

<http://glapn.org/6012MilestonesLGBTQLaw.html>

April 15, 1973

Oregon reratifies the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Oregon ratified it in 1866, but rescinded ratification two years later. However, it still became federal law in 1868. The reratification was sponsored by Bill McCoy, Oregon's first black legislator and a cosponsor of Oregon's first sexual orientation civil rights bill. The 14th Amendment gives U.S. citizenship to African Americans and eventually applies most of the U.S. Bill of Rights to the state and local level. (<https://storywall.osbar.org/1960-1979/>)



(Artwork from
<http://www.pbs.org>)



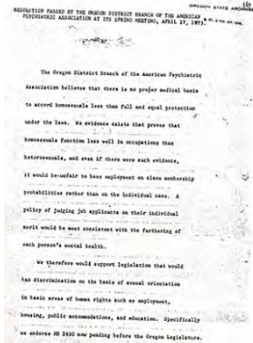
Bill McCoy

April 17, 1973

The Oregon District Branch of the American Psychiatric Association issues a statement supporting a sexual orientation nondiscrimination law, stating that it is in the best interest of mental health.

“No evidence exists that proves that homosexuals function less well in occupations than heterosexuals . . . A policy of judging job applicants on their individual merit would be most consistent with the furthering of each person’s mental health.”

<http://glapn.org/6181PaulyAPA.html>



The Oregon psychiatric group’s statement of support

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May 2, 1973

An Oregon House committee holds an historic hearing on HB 2930, Oregon's first bill that would have banned job and housing discrimination based on sexual orientation.

(<http://glapn.org/6110earlyattenpts.html>)



On the left are Rita and Charles Knapp. To their right is their daughter, trailblazing lesbian activist Kristan Knapp. In 1973, Rita gave an eloquent testimony to an Oregon House committee in support of Oregon's first bill that would have banned discrimination based on sexual orientation. A few years later, Rita and Charles cofounded PFLAG Portland.



Vera Katz, a primary House cosponsor of HB 2930



Stephen Kafoury, a primary House cosponsor of HB 2930

July 3, 1973

Oregon's first bill that would have banned discrimination based on sexual orientation misses passage in the Oregon House by just two votes short of a majority.

(<http://glapn.org/6110earlyattenpts.html>)



House Bill 2930 final vote tally. On the left in the photo is Gretchen Kafoury, a women's issue lobbyist and early straight ally who helped with the bill.





Commissioner Connie McCready sponsored the City of Portland resolution banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in city employment.
(photo from <https://en.wikipedia.org>)

December 18, 1974

The City of Portland passes a resolution which bans discrimination based on sexual orientation in municipal employment, the first such victory in Oregon.

(<http://glapn.org/6110earlyattenpts.html>)

June 25, 1977

The newspaper *Oregon Journal* publishes an article about gay activist Susie Shepherd and her parents who cofounded PFLAG Portland. The article explains how Ann and Bill Shepherd have come to accept their daughter's sexual orientation and now support gay civil rights.



October 24, 1977



Openly gay University of Oregon Law School Professor Dominick “Dom” Vetri wrote the 1977 Eugene ordinance banning sexual orientation discrimination.

The City of Eugene passes an ordinance banning discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations based on sexual orientation.

It is the first legislative measure in Oregon banning sexual orientation discrimination in an area other than just city employment.

<http://glapn.org/6028DomVetri.html>

May 23, 1978

Eugene voters approve Ballot Measure 51, overturning the city's ordinance which had banned sexual orientation discrimination.

<http://glapn.org/6028DomVetri.html>



December 16, 1985

Portland based Cascade AIDS Project (CAP) is born. It provides education, services, and funding to assist people living with HIV, to reduce stigma, and to prevent the spread of HIV.

http://egov.sos.state.or.us/br/pkg_web_name_srch_inq.show_detl?p_be_rsn=326752&p_srce=BR_INQ&p_print=FALSE





The Oregon State
Capitol

October 14, 1987

Governor Neil Goldschmidt issues an executive order banning employment discrimination based on sexual orientation in the executive branch of state government.

http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/basic_rights_oregon/#.U73ElfdV8E

November 8, 1988

In an initiative driven by the Oregon Citizens Alliance, voters approve Ballot Measure 8, overturning Governor Goldschmidt's executive order which had banned discrimination based on sexual orientation in the executive branch of state employment.



Voters' Pamphlet entry explaining Measure 8

http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/basic_rights_oregon/#.U73EIfldV8E

Some Major Dates in Oregon LGBTQ Movement History



Portland City Commissioner Mike Lindberg, pictured above, sponsored the City of Portland ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual. Helping craft the ordinance was Lindberg's gay aide, the late Keeston Lowery; and lesbian Kathleen Saadat who worked for Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury. Both are pictured below.



October 3, 1991

The City of Portland passes an ordinance that bans discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

This is the first sexual orientation civil rights law in Oregon that was not repealed by a ballot measure.

<http://glapn.org/6012MilestonesLGBTQLaw.html>

May 19, 1992



Janice Wilson

Judge Janice Wilson, who identifies as lesbian and who had been appointed the previous year to fill a vacancy on an Oregon District Court, is elected to retain her seat.

As a result, she becomes the first openly LGBTQ person to be elected to public office in Oregon.

<http://www.glapn.org/6014OregonLGBTElected.html>

November 3, 1992



Voters' Pamphlet
entry explaining
Measure 9



Gail Shibley

Oregon voters defeat Ballot Measure 9 which would have banned sexual orientation non-discrimination laws and required public schools to teach that homosexuality is “abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse”.

That same day, lesbian Gail Shibley is elected to the Oregon House seat to which she had been appointed in 1991, becoming the first openly LGBTQ person elected to the Oregon Legislative Assembly.

<http://glapn.org/6012MilestonesLGBTQLaw.html>

November 12, 1992



Harriet Merrick, a lesbian employee of the University of Oregon, was the plaintiff in the law suit that overturned Measure 8.

The Oregon Court of Appeals rules that Ballot Measure 8, passed in 1988 to undo protection from sexual orientation discrimination in state government, is unconstitutional. The ruling states that the Oregon Constitution protects "free and open expression about sexual orientation".

<http://glapn.org/6013OregonAntiGayMeasures.html>

November 8, 1994



Lesbian
activist
Cathy
Abbruzzese
worked to
defeat
Measure
13.

Oregon voters defeat Ballot Measure 13. The initiative was titled “Amends Constitution: Governments Cannot Approve, Create Classifications Based on, Homosexuality”. Among other things, the amendment would have prevented anti-discrimination protection based on sexual orientation.

<http://glapn.org/6013OregonAntiGayMeasures.html>

October 30, 1996

Basic Rights Oregon (BRO) is founded to fight any further anti-gay ballot measures and to advocate for LGBTQ equality.

BRO soon becomes the major LGBTQ equality advocate in Oregon. It is the first such organization that is committed to advocating for transgender people.

<http://glapn.org/6013OregonAntiGayMeasures.html>



December 9, 1998

In *Tanner v. OHSU*, the Oregon Court of Appeals rules that public agencies must provide benefits to the same-gender partners of employees if they provide those benefits to the spouses of heterosexual married employees.

<http://glapn.org/6514TannerChickadonz.html>



In the middle, Christine Tanner and Lisa Chickadonz, plaintiffs in *Tanner v. OHSU*. On the outside are their two children they raised together.

November 7, 2000

Oregon voters defeat yet another anti-gay Ballot Measure 9. Its official description was “Prohibits Public School Instruction Encouraging, Promoting, Sanctioning Homosexual, Bisexual Behaviors”.

It is the last anti-gay ballot measure to be sponsored by the Oregon Citizens Alliance.

<http://glapn.org/6012MilestonesLGBTQLaw.html>



Lesbian activist Kathleen Sullivan led the opposition to the year 2000 anti-gay Ballot Measure 9.



Transgender activist Lori Buckwalter, Executive Director of It's Time, Oregon! served as consultant to the City of Portland on the drafting of gender identity protective language.

December 13, 2000
The Portland City Council votes to ban discrimination based on gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

<http://www.glapn.org/6007historyLGBTQrights.html>



June 3, 2003

Portland's Q Center is incorporated.

The center's purpose is to provide dedicated space for LGBTQ community groups to gather, organize, socialize, educate, heal, and move the movement forward. In 2006 Q Center opens its first "bricks and mortar" facility in the inner Southeast warehouse district, and quickly outgrows the that space. In 2009, Q Center moves to its present home on North Mississippi Avenue while expanding its programmatic reach. "Q Center provides a safe space to support and celebrate LGBTQ diversity, equity, visibility and community building."

[\(http://www.pdxqcenter.org/about/\)](http://www.pdxqcenter.org/about/)

Some Major Dates in Oregon LGBTQ Movement History



Mary Li and Becky Kennedy (on the right above) were the first Oregon couple to get a Multnomah County same-gender marriage license in 2004.



Couples outside of the Multnomah County office where same-gender marriage licenses were being issued in 2004 (Photo from <http://www.sfgate.com/>)

March 3, 2004

Multnomah County begins granting marriage licenses to same-gender couples. The issuances are discontinued on April 20 by court order.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oregon_Ballot_Measure_36_\(2004\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oregon_Ballot_Measure_36_(2004))

November 2, 2004

Oregon voters approve ballot Measure 36, which bans same-gender marriage by constitutional amendment.



Ad opposing Measure 36.



Oregon Supreme Court Justice Rives Kistler, elected 2004 (Photo from www.mbabar.org)

On the same day, Justice Rives Kistler, an openly gay man, wins a statewide election to retain his Oregon Supreme Court position to which he had been appointed in 2003. He is the first openly LGBTQ state supreme court justice in the nation.

<http://glapn.org/6013OregonAntiGayMeasures.html>

<http://glapn.org/6014OregonLGBTElected.html>

November 7, 2006

Virginia Linder is elected to the Oregon Supreme Court.

She is the first openly lesbian state supreme court justice in the nation, the first openly LGBTQ person elected as a non-incumbent to a state supreme court, and the first non-incumbent woman elected to the Oregon Supreme Court.



Virginia Linder

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_Linder#cite_note-6

May 9, 2007

Governor Ted Kulongoski signs into law the Oregon Equality Act, a ban on discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and other areas based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

He also signs a bill creating a domestic partner registry system allowing same sex couples many of the benefits of marriage.

(<http://glapn.org/6012MilestonesLGBTQLaw.html>)



November 4, 2008

Democrat Kate Brown, who openly identifies as bisexual, is elected Oregon Secretary of State, the second highest state position in Oregon public office. Sam Adams is elected Mayor of Portland, becoming the first openly gay mayor of one of the 30th largest U.S. cities. Stu Rasmussen, who is transgender, is elected mayor of Silverton.



Kate Brown



Sam Adams



Stu Rasmussen

<http://glapn.org/6014OregonLGBTElected.html>

November 15, 2012



Tina Kotek,
Oregon House
Speaker

Oregon Representative Tina Kotek is chosen to be House Speaker, becoming the first openly lesbian leader of a state legislative chamber anywhere in the U.S., and the first openly LGBTQ person to head an Oregon legislative chamber.

<http://glapn.org/6014OregonLGBTElected.html>

December 19, 2012

The State of Oregon announces it will prohibit health care providers from discriminating against a policy holder based on their actual or perceived gender identity and expression.



As a BRO employee at that time, transgender activist Sasha Buchert worked to remove healthcare exclusions for transgender Oregonians.

(<http://glapn.org/6012MilestonesLGBTQLaw.html>)

February 14, 2013

LGBTQ rights group Basic Rights Oregon (BRO) announces it will work toward a ballot measure that will legalize same-gender marriage in the state.

A coalition creates Oregon United for Marriage to sponsor and promote the measure.

<http://glapn.org/6026EqualityOrganizations.html>



August 24, 2013

People from a broad coalition, including a large contingent of LGBTQ people and allies, march in Portland to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington. A rally that follows includes an eloquent speech by black gay activist Khalil Edwards.



Khalil Edwards

(First person report)

November 24, 2017



Marchers from BRO, PFLAG Portland, and PFLAG Portland Black Chapter

October 3, 2013

Portlanders Carmen Gutiérrez of El Salvador and Cesar Higgins of Colombia receive permanent U.S. residency through their same-gender spouses.

They're among the first in Oregon to receive green cards as a result of a U. S. Supreme Court ruling in the United States v. Windsor.

[\(http://www.opb.org/news/series/gaymarriage/oregonians-granted-us-residency-through-same-sex-spouses/\)](http://www.opb.org/news/series/gaymarriage/oregonians-granted-us-residency-through-same-sex-spouses/)



From the left: Attorney Stephen Manning, Carmen Gutiérrez's mother, Carmen Gutiérrez's wife Jensi Albright, Carmen Gutiérrez, Cesar Higgins' husband Valerium Pereira, Cesar Higgins, and attorney Jessica Boell. Photo from opb.org.

May 19, 2014



Judge Michael
McShane

U.S. District Court Judge Michael McShane, who is openly gay, issues his decision in consolidated cases *Geiger v. Kitzhaber* and *Rummell v. Kitzhaber*. He rules that Oregon laws banning same-gender marriage are unconstitutional. *Weddings start the same day. The planned ballot measure to overturn the ban is dropped since it is no longer necessary.*

<http://glapn.org/6012MilestonesLGBTQLaw.html>

December 7, 2015

Lynn Nakamoto is appointed to the Oregon Supreme Court.

She wins the election to retain that position in November of 2016. In the early 1990s, Lynn was a cofounder of the Asian Pacific Islander Lesbians and Gays (APLG), now called Asian Pacific Islander Pride. She is now the first Asian American and first woman of color to serve as an Oregon Supreme Court Justice.

<http://glapn.org/6014OregonLGBTElected.html>



Lynn Nakamoto

November 8, 2016



Governor Kate
Brown

Because John Kitzhaber resigned his position as Oregon governor, Oregon Secretary of State Kate Brown was inaugurated to replace him on February 18, 2015 as stipulated in the Oregon constitution. Brown had been openly bisexual since she was an Oregon House member in the early 1990s, so she became the first person in the nation to become governor while openly LGBTQ.

She now wins an election to retain that seat, thus become the first openly LGBTQ person in the nation to be elected governor.

http://www.oregonlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2015/02/live_updates_kate_brown_become.html

Some Major Dates in Oregon LGBTQ Movement History



**October 23,
2017**

**Governor Kate
Brown issues a
proclamation
designating
October 2017 as
LGBTQ History
Month.**

Suggested further reading:

- [Oregon LGBTQ History before 1970](#)
- [How the Oregon LGBTQ Movement was Born](#)
- [A History of Oregon's Major LGBTQ Equality Organizations](#)
- [A History of Oregon LGBTQ Equality Law Since 1970](#)
- [Queer Heroes Northwest](#)
- [Oregon Trans Timeline](#)
- [Some Notable Oregonians who have been openly Bisexual](#)
- [Some Oregon LGBTQ Related Firsts and Records](#)
- [A Place at the Table](#)
- [The Persistent Ones: Some Reasons for Successes in the Oregon LGBTQ Movement](#)