

Gov. signs bills to expand protection, rights for gays, lesbians

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Signs into law SB 2 and HB 2007, prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and establishing legal recognition of same-sex relationships

SALEM, Ore. — In a celebration of success after decades of hard work to extend equality to gay and lesbian Oregonians, today Governor Ted Kulongoski signed into law legislation prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and providing legal recognition of domestic partnerships between same-sex couples. “I started this legislative session declaring that this is the session of opportunity, where we will succeed in affording all Oregonians the same rights and protections under the law” and where we will formally recognize that diversity and equality of opportunity makes us all stronger, not weaker,” Governor Kulongoski said. “And today we’re upholding that promise and the values and principles of Oregon” that we are all created equal and that Oregon is a land of equal opportunity for all of our citizens.” Joined by former Governor Barbara Roberts, House Speaker Jeff Merkley, Senate Majority Leader Kate Brown and community leaders, the Governor signed into law Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 2007. Both bills were introduced in the Legislature based on the recommendations of the Governor’s Taskforce on Equality, which submitted its findings in December 2006. Senate Bill 2 bans discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace, housing and public accommodations. House Bill 2007 creates domestic partnerships, which are civil contracts between adults of the same sex, and establishes that domestic partners have the same responsibilities, privileges, immunities, rights and benefits of married couples and, if applicable, divorced couples. Oregon will now be the eighth state to extend broad recognition to same-sex couples and the 18th to establish anti-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation. “If you look at the majority of the bills that pass each session, they are what I call transactional,” the Governor continued. “However, every decade or so there are a few bills that are actually transformational” and House Bill 2007 and Senate Bill 2 are two pieces of legislation that will literally transform our state from one of exclusion to one of complete inclusion.” Governor Kulongoski began his struggle to ban discrimination against gay and lesbian Oregonians during his first term in the Oregon State Legislature, 1975. During that session, he introduced legislation prohibiting such discrimination. Although it failed on the House floor by one vote, the Governor has continued to fight for equality throughout his career. “This has been a long road traveled. It has taken patience. It has taken perseverance. It has taken our will to never give up on the dream of hope and opportunity for all Oregonians,” Governor Kulongoski said. “And today, we can deliver that dream by ending legal discrimination once and for all against gays and lesbians in Oregon” and by extending protections and legal recognition for same-sex couples and their families.” A copy of SB 2 can be found here:<http://www.leg.state.or.us/07reg/measures/sb0001.dir/sb0002.en.html> A copy of HB 2007 can be found here:<http://www.leg.state.or.us/07reg/measures/hb2000.dir/hb2007.en.html> A copy of the Governor’s remarks can be found here:http://governor.oregon.gov/Gov/speech/speech_050907.shtml More information on the Governor’s Task Force on Equality can be found here:http://www.oregon.gov/Gov/taskforce_on_equality/gtoe_index.shtml

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