

**HOMOSEXUALS**

# Gay Politicians Say Losses Are Partly Offset by Gains

By **DAVID W. DUNLAP**  
Special to The New York Times

DALLAS, Nov. 13 — Although they lost several major allies and face a far more conservative and hostile Congress, lesbian and gay political leaders said Tuesday's election was not a repudiation by voters of the gay rights movement.

"People are in mourning, as they well should be," said Sheila James Kuehl, speaking here at a conference sponsored by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "Yet, we defeated two anti-gay initiatives, and 24 lesbian or gay officials were re-elected or newly elected."

On Tuesday, Ms. Kuehl became the first openly homosexual candidate elected to the California Legislature, winning in a State Assembly district that includes Santa Monica. Her presence here caused a stir, not only because of her victory but because she is widely remembered for playing the character Zelda Gilroy on the "Dobie Gillis Show."

The initiatives she referred to, in Oregon and Idaho, would have prohibited laws protecting homosexuals, as a class, from discrimination in housing and employment. The measures would also have restricted minors' access to materials about homosexuality in public libraries and would have forbidden public school teachers from presenting homosexuality as normal.

"Basic rights have been defended in Oregon," said Julie Davis, campaign manager for the No on 13 Committee, named for the defeated initiative there, Measure 13.

Oregon voters also re-elected four openly homosexual or bisexual members of the 60-seat House of Representatives. A fifth gay candidate was in a race that was still too close to call.

Voters in Phoenix sent an openly gay man, Ken Chevront, to the Arizona House of Representatives for the first time. Two of five seats open on San Francisco's Board of Supervisors were won by lesbians and another seat was won by a gay man. Three gay United States Representatives — Barney Frank and Gerry E. Studds of Massachusetts and Steve Gunderson of Wisconsin — were re-elected.

While homosexual candidates made strides in local races around the nation, however, two statewide candidates lost: Karen S. Burstein, who ran for Attorney General in New York, and Tony Miller, who ran for Secretary of State in California.

"We've grown to the point where we can be elected locally," Ms. Kuehl said, "but not yet to the point where we can be elected statewide."

When some 1,000 gay and lesbian organizers from around the country began arriving on Wednesday for the five-day strategy session convened by the task force, they did so knowing that political allies like Gov. Ann W. Richards of Texas had gone down to defeat.

"People were not only frustrated but fearful, saying things like, 'This is looking like a scarier place to live,'" said Deborah Johnson-Rolon, co-chairwoman of the task force, a national organization that advocates equality and civil rights for homosexuals.

She said the mood changed as word spread that two dozen gay officials had been elected and that Measure 13 in Oregon and a similar measure, Proposition 1 in Idaho, had been rejected, although a similar initiative passed in Alachua County, Fla., whose seat is Gainesville.

"We realized that we really were making a significant amount of progress," Ms. Johnson-Rolon said.

Peri Jude Radecic, executive director of the task force, said the rejection of the referendums in the

## Homosexuals were elected and anti-gay measures defeated.

West was "a good, clear signal to the radical right that these kinds of initiatives won't be tolerated." But she also noted that voters had sent any number of highly conservative candidates to Congress and the state houses.

State Representative Glen Maxey, the first openly gay man elected to the Texas Legislature, in 1991, also found mixed signals this campaign season. Though he won re-election in East Austin, he said he had never seen such a high level of violence against homosexuals.

"A half-dozen gay men have been murdered in this state alone," he said. "In this election, I received a death threat. Someone said they were going to vote with a bullet."

Like many speakers at the conference, Mr. Maxey stressed the need for gay organizations to build bridges to other groups.

"Unless we align ourselves to fight



Mark Graham for The New York Times  
Sheila James Kuehl, the first openly homosexual candidate elected to the California State Assembly.

hate and fear, we'll all hang separately," said Vallerie D. Wagner, co-chairwoman of the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum, based in Los Angeles.

Diane Sands, campaign manager for the No on 1 Coalition in Idaho, credited defeat of that measure to a "broad grass-roots coalition," including every major newspaper and elected official, corporations, librarians, two orders of nuns and Mormons.

"Mormons understand discrimination," she said. "Until a few years ago, it was in the Idaho Constitution that a Mormon couldn't hold public office."

Kelly A. Walton, chairman of the Idaho Citizens Alliance, which sponsored the proposition, blamed the defeat on money, saying the other side had a lot more for radio and television advertising. He said the alliance spent \$190,000. The No on 1 Coalition spent about \$600,000, Ms. Sands said.

It appeared that the measure would lose by 50.4 percent to 49.6 percent, Mr. Walton said in a telephone interview, adding, "They out-gunned us financially, and the media were opposed. Yet they only eked out a 3,000-vote margin."

Mr. Walton said he was encouraged to try again in 1996 and would also work to get similar measures on ballots in neighboring Washington and Nevada.

Lon T. Mabon, chairman of the conservative Oregon Citizens Alliance, which sponsored Measure 13, said he would also try again. He noted that Measure 13 had fared better than the alliance's previous referendum, in 1992, which would have classified homosexuality as "abnormal, wrong, unnatural and perverse."

## Gay Officials Gather to Share Ideas

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

Special to The New York Times

SEATTLE, Nov. 21 — Like many colleagues in state capitols and city halls around the nation, the officials who met here over the weekend are concerned about race relations, religious conservatism and re-election.

But what brought about 60 of them together is what sets them apart: they are openly gay, a small but growing presence in local government. They gathered as they have each year since 1985.

"Who else do you talk to about your problems with your domestic partner — or, more like it, your domestic partner's problems with you?" asked David Scordras, a founder of the International Network of Lesbian and Gay Officials, which sponsors the conferences. Mr. Scordras served 10 years on the Boston City Council until his defeat last year.

And where else, these officials said, could they swap stories over what seems to be a national phenomenon: the preoccupation of the press with their homosexuality. They said it was most often reporters, not constituents or opponents, who brought up the issue.

Sherry D. Harris was elected to the Seattle City Council in 1981, becoming the first openly lesbian black woman to hold public office. "We used to have a joke in my campaign," she said. "Sherry Harris, the lesbian" — was always how the news story started, no matter what it was about. And what her legislative agenda was about, she said, was transportation.

State Representative Gail Shibley of Portland, Ore., said that in considering with other gay officials, she could reassure herself that reporters were "not just picking on me and not just picking on Oregon — this defines who you are." She, too, said that transportation issues had defined her campaign.

While conference participants spoke of the need for stronger coalitions between gay organizations and groups favoring abortion rights or environmental protection, they acknowledged the wide gaps that have yet to be bridged within their own ranks.

"We live in a racist society," Ms. Harris said. "The same dynamic exists in the gay community."

Dorinda Henry, a legislative assistant to Ms. Harris, said she took exception to comparisons between the gay rights and earlier civil rights struggles. "As an African-American," she said, "many of my people have gone through much, much more than any gay white man has ever gone through."

Ron Simons, the editor of Brother to Brother Seattle, a monthly newsletter for black gay and bisexual men, told the officials that "one of the reasons people of color get marginalized and left out is because many fund-raising events come in at \$100 or \$200 or \$1,000 a shot," which they cannot afford.

Ms. Harris said that feelings of alienation had made it "very difficult" to enlist black constituents in the fight earlier this year to keep two initiatives opposing gay rights off the ballot in Washington.

The distance between some black leaders and some gay causes is one that religious conservatives have turned to political advantage.

The Rev. Louis P. Sheldon, chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition, a conservative church network, said "many of our black churches in Brooklyn were very active below the radar screen" in helping defeat Karen S. Burstein, who ran for Attorney General of New York State.

Pastors and congregations were told that "if this woman was elected Attorney General, it would be very precarious for conservative Christians," Mr. Sheldon said.

But Ms. Burstein's defeat was an

exception to the rule for openly gay candidates. The Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, a political-action committee, said 17 of the 14 candidates it backed in the general election had won their races.

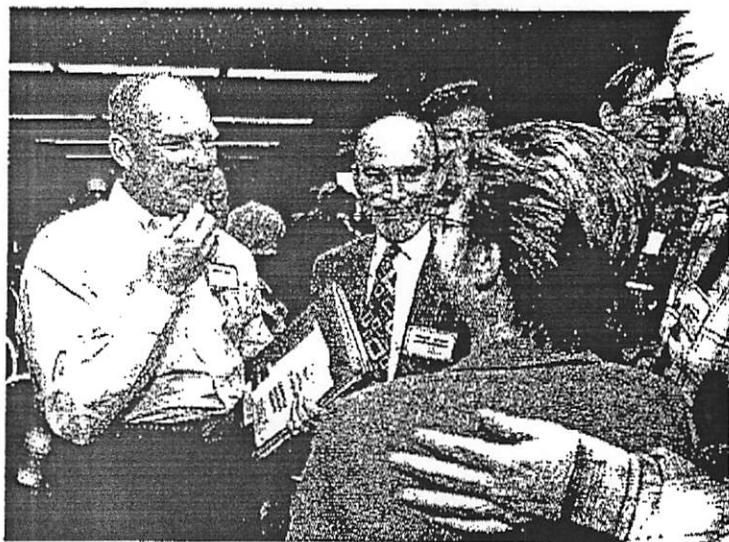
"It was far more hazardous to be an openly Democratic candidate than openly gay or lesbian," said William W. Waybourn, the fund's executive director, in a telephone interview. He said the number of openly gay public officials in the nation had grown by 9, to 216, out of a total of 476,000.

Open antagonism was not faced by every candidate, but Cal Anderson got a taste of it running for the State Senate after representing Seattle for seven years in the Washington House of Representatives. He said his Republican opponent, Mike Meene, referred in a campaign appearance to Mr. Anderson's "perverted and deviant life style."

"I think it really did contribute to the fact that I got 51 percent of the vote," Mr. Anderson said. "A lot of people don't want to be associated with that kind of bigotry."

Other state legislators at the conference included Senator William P. Fitzpatrick of Rhode Island, Assemblywoman Deborah J. Glick of New York and Representatives Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, Karen Clark of Minnesota, and George V. Eighmey and Cynthia Wooten of Oregon.

Some city council members who attended were Thomas K. Duane of Manhattan, Tim O. Meins of Rochester, Bruce R. Williams of Takoma Park, Md., and John Hellman of West Hollywood, Calif., who will serve this year as Mayor, Tom Ammann, one of three openly gay can-



Participants greeting each other on Saturday in Seattle at a conference of gay public officials from around the nation. About 60 officials from state capitols and city halls discussed political and social concerns at the talks, which are sponsored by the International Network of Lesbian and Gay Officials.

didates elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors this month, was also present.

Oregon voters elected five openly homosexual or bisexual Representatives, including a Republican, Chuck Carpenter. They also defeated a referendum to deny homosexuals sta-

tus as a minority and, therefore, protection against discrimination in employment and housing. The initiative was advanced by Lon T. Mabon, chairman of the conservative Oregon Citizens Alliance.

"It doesn't surprise me that openly gay and lesbian candidates can

win in Portland and Eugene," Mabon said by telephone. "From standpoint of democracy, I care less. If they can run and can and the constituency doesn't see a problem, that's their business. From my standpoint, I'm disturbed that they don't see a problem."