

GROUPS DECLARE SUPPORT FOR EMBATTLED CHIEF - Oregonian, The (Portland, OR) - July 10, 1991 - page C14

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The controversy over the Oregon Citizens Alliance's anti-homosexuality initiative escalated Tuesday as a coalition of groups affirmed support for gay rights and for Portland Police Chief **Tom Potter**.

“The OCA is a small but vocal self-righteous band of bigots,” Richard Brown, a member of the Chief's Forum, said at a news conference in front of the Justice Center in downtown Portland. The forum is a citizen committee created to advise **Potter** about community policing and other issues.

Brown and other speakers objected to an alliance-sponsored initiative that would declare homosexuality a perversion. They also decried the alliance's criticism of **Potter** for his commitment to gay rights.

“We are in complete agreement with the chief in accepting and allowing diversity,” said Patrick F. Donaldson, executive director of the Citizens Crime Commission, an affiliate of the Portland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. “As a public servant, he is acting in the best interest of all citizens.”

Darryl Tukufu, executive director of the Portland Urban League, said anti-gay attacks should be fought as strongly as racism and sexism. “It's another aspect of the problem,” he said.

Gov. Barbara Roberts told the group that people must speak out.

“We will continue to beat back attempts that challenge our citizens' right to privacy,” she said in a prepared statement read by spokeswoman Gwenn Baldwin. “We cannot stand silently by and pretend that discrimination and injustice are acceptable behavior against any Oregon citizen.”

About 30 persons attended the news conference, including representatives from the Urban League, the American Friends Service Committee and the Coalition for Human Dignity. It came a day after the Oregon Citizens Alliance publicly chided **Potter** for what they claim is his advocacy of homosexuality.

As the Tuesday news conference was dispersing, about a half-dozen alliance members showed up with protest signs and were quickly surrounded by a small group of gay rights advocates. After some discussions and chanting by the gay rights activists that escalated to brief bouts of shouting, the groups disbanded. There were no arrests.

“When we stand up for traditional American family values, we're abused,” said alliance spokesman Scott Lively, referring to the group's news conference Monday that was likewise disrupted by gay rights protesters. “We're more than willing to allow others to speak their mind.”

The alliance objects to **Potter**'s participation in a June 22 Lesbian and Gay Pride March and Rally,

his efforts to encourage gays and lesbians to apply for police work and his public support for his daughter, **Katie Potter**, an openly lesbian Portland policewoman.

Potter responded Monday that he is committed to ensuring equal rights for all of Portland's citizens.

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