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*Out in the Mountains* welcomes your letters. Although we will withhold names from printing upon request, the letter must be accompanied by a verifiable name and address in order to be considered for publication. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity. Letters are also subject to the editorial policy stated in the masthead.

### Boom Not A Boon For All

Editor:

For 60,000 of our Vermont neighbors, the current economic "boom" is a bad joke. These neighbors are working full-time, yet remain in poverty. Why? Because they are not being paid a livable wage. A wage a family can live on. A wage that can pay for the most basic needs: food, housing, health and child care, clothing, heat, transportation – forget about a birthday gift, or a night out at the movies.

Anyone who works full time should earn enough to live on.

A basic sense of justice calls for a change in the minimum wage (\$5.75 an hour). When the minimum wage was first passed into law in 1937, President Roosevelt declared, "I mean more than a bare subsistence level – I mean the wages of decent living." Today, the minimum wage is a poverty wage.

People earning less than a livable wage have bitter choices to make: which basic needs must they do without? 58,000 Vermonters have no health care, many live in sub-standard housing, and many must turn to public assistance programs. A large number work two, or even three, jobs with little time for family life, and less for community involvement. Many are forced into debt. Is this fair for full-time workers? Is this good for Vermont?

Our goal must be to raise all Vermonters to a livable wage.

How do we get closer to the \$10.37 an hour livable wage? As a start, we can – and must! – raise the minimum wage. A recent study commissioned by the Vermont Legislature found that the current \$5.75/hr minimum wage could be raised to \$7.00/hr with no negative effects.

Interested Vermonters can get more information by contacting the Vermont Livable Wage Campaign at 802-486-3344, or Workcent@sover.net.

Sonya Friedman  
Chelsea, VT

### Ain't Equal Til It's Equal

Editor:

I am writing in regards to the recent Supreme Court decision on same sex marriage and to counter some of the hateful and misguided rhetoric that is circulating.

This is a hot button issue currently, but the gay community is seeking equality for committed, loving, long-term relationships. We are from all walks of life and serve our communities around the state in various capacities. We have been part of the fabric of this state since its inception, and have been raising children and functioning in every aspect as married heterosexual couples do, without the protections of the law. Civil marriage as seen in the eyes of the law, is a corporate merger between citizens.

I have heard several groups that are opposed to this, based on religious grounds. This is a civil matter and we are not trying to mandate any changes to religious ideology. Those can only be made, based on the particular religion's internal governing body.

There is currently a push to make a 'separate but equal' 'domestic partnership' instead of marriage for same sex couples. If you review all the laws that pertain to benefits and protections under the law, they state 'married couples or persons' and not 'domestic partners.' Current immigration laws, tax laws, and survivorship laws, all state married and not 'domestic partners'. This 'separate but equal' legislation harkens back to the Jim Crow laws of the south that were not equal.

Take a moment to consider this. If you remove the word 'gay' from the term 'gay marriage' and insert 'interracial' or any number of ethnic or racial groups, you will suddenly see how absurd the argument against gay marriage really is. This discrimination would not be tolerated against other citizens, but currently is tolerated for gay couples. The same arguments have been made before against interracial marriages, and we now look upon those arguments as racist and

intolerant.

The Supreme Court decision took quite a lot of courage to make in light of the current tide of anti-gay rhetoric going around. The Legislature should show equal courage and pass same sex marriage laws. This would eliminate any inequality in the application of the law.

Steven Board  
Roxbury, VT

### Separate But Equal Isn't

Editor:

I am a churchgoing Christian, a widowed mother of five grown children, a tax-paying member of the workforce, a property owner, and a registered voter, and I fully and completely support the right of all citizens to all rights and benefits of citizenship. This includes the right of gay and lesbian citizens to same-sex marriage.

I find the objections to same-sex marriage to be both specious and biased. Some people object on religious grounds, but marriage as a social contract between two persons need neither receive nor seek religious concurrence – civil marriage is a fact already. Some say that marriage is intended for the procreation of children, and thus

should be restricted to heterosexuals, but many heterosexual couples marry either not intending to have children or without the ability to do so (for example, those who marry late in life). Some who object say that our cultural and linguistic understanding of the concept of marriage implies marriage only between a man and a woman. However, our understanding of many historically based concepts has changed over time: interracial marriages were formerly prohibited in many states. This injustice was corrected, and the institution of marriage does not seem to have suffered thereby.

I am mystified too that many cite "immorality" as an objection to gay marriage. Isn't marriage, with its mutual commitment and social stability, a more "moral" choice than casual relationships? Furthermore, isn't sexuality only a part of marriage? (And who ever thinks to question the sexual practices of heterosexual couples?)

Our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters should have the right to marry. The right to civil marriage between two persons of any gender is a matter of simple equality. There is no such thing as "separate but equal" justice.

Gina Logan  
Northfield, VT

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### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see OITM as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

### EDITORIAL POLICY

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of *Out in the Mountains*. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic.

Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and a contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

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