

April 26, 2023

Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Knopp, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

I offer this testimony in my support of Senate Joint Resolution (“SJR”) 33, the Equal Rights For All Measure. By way of background, this measure would affirm that marriage in Oregon is no longer limited to, "one man, one woman," and also affirm that my rights under the Oregon Constitution will be guaranteed regardless of: "(a) Pregnancy, pregnancy outcomes or related health decisions; (b) Gender identity or related health decisions; (c) Sexual orientation; or (d) Gender.

My name is Cynthia Smith, I’m a veteran and I’ve served in both the United States Army Reserve and Air Force. I retired from the Air Force after 20 years of service. I live in Multnomah County. I’m testifying that I fully support Senate Joint Resolution 33.

I’ve served in a lot of places during my service including in Saudi Arabia, and Iraq during wartime operations. During my entire 24 years serving in the military, I’ve never cared about a person’s sexual orientation or gender; I only cared if they could do the job/work that needed to be done. Several of my friends were gay and unable to be open about it in the time of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” I thought it was awful that they couldn’t openly and love who they loved-- thank god that’s changed now.

I believe that love is a wonderful gift and consenting adults should be able to marry the person they love, whether they are a man and a man, a woman and a woman, a man and a woman, or any other combination of gender identity that exists. I have neither the right, nor the desire to tell people who they should be allowed to love or marry.

I am very grateful that Oregon is a progressive state that also supports my right to make healthcare decisions over my body. When I was stationed in Germany in 1990, I was raped. At the time, if you were in the military and became pregnant, you did not have access to reproductive healthcare for an abortion. So besides dealing with the physical damage to my body, I had to worry about what would happen if I became pregnant. At the time, I would have had to either pursue an abortion in Germany or fly back to the states and try to get an abortion, all at my expense since the military healthcare program could not perform abortions. An abortion in Germany in 1990, required approval by two different doctors, counseling and then once approved, and a three-day waiting period—I would have had to do all of this while not being remotely fluent in German. I was fortunate that I did not become pregnant as a result of the rape.

As progressive as Oregon is, the wise thing would be to amend the constitution to ensure: that the right to marry isn’t just limited to “one man, one woman” is added and to ensure that women in Oregon will always have access to reproductive healthcare which includes abortion. The one way Oregonians can be assured that we have the option for abortions is if the Oregon constitution is amended.