ANNE LEVINSON

"The woman behind the curtain of marriage equality"

When the religious right set out to repeal Washington's "everything but marriage" domestic partnership law in 2009, Christian conservatives were on a roll. They had dealt a severe blow to LGBTQ civil rights in California the previous year. Using potent fear-mongering ads, conservatives had persuaded voters to amend their state constitution to ban same-sex marriage. What happened next in the Evergreen State would ripple across the country. Would progress be set back again in 2009? Or would Washingtonians become the first voters in United States history to endorse legal family recognition for gays and lesbians?

Community leaders turned to Anne Levinson. A former judge, Levinson had been in the civil rights trenches for a couple decades. She was one of the first "out" officials in the state when she was chief of staff and chief problem-solver for Seattle's first African-American mayor, Norm Rice.

Her 2009 challenge was fraught. Evangelicals were collecting signatures to put Referendum 71 on the November ballot, arguing in churches and on street corners that domestic partnerships were a stepping stone to same-sex marriage. Given the results in California and other states, LGBTQ advocates did not want to risk making the vote in Washington a litmus test for marriage. Levinson would need to motivate allies and voters with a cause—domestic partnerships—that at first glance appeared a dry mix of pension and medical-leave rights, a medley of uninspiring benefits.

While she liked to stay out of the limelight, Levinson was battle tested. In 1990, she led a fight against the repeal of funeral-and-sick leave for Seattle city employees with domestic partners. A few years later, she helped create and name "Hands Off Washington," a statewide group that aimed to halt Oregon an-

Facing page: Anne Levinson, a former judge, pronounced Jane Abbott Lighty and Pete-e Petersen married at Seattle's Benaroya Hall on Dec. 9, 2012. *Anne Levinson*

ti-LGBTQ extremists sweeping across the border. And when initiative-hawker Tim Eyman tried to steer the anti-gay bandwagon in 2006, she was asked to stop him.

She was described as a "very gentle person with a spine of steel," "warm and approachable but excruciatingly precise," and a taskmaster "diligent to a fault." Levinson briefly detoured from LGBTQ civil rights after dispatching Eyman. In stealthy negotiations, she engineered a deal with the Oklahoma oil-and-gas tycoons who had bought the Supersonics and Storm professional basketball teams. While Clay Bennett and his crewcut gang hauled the Sonics off to the thunderous plains, Levinson managed to keep Sue Bird, Lauren Jackson and the Storm in Seattle under ownership of local women.

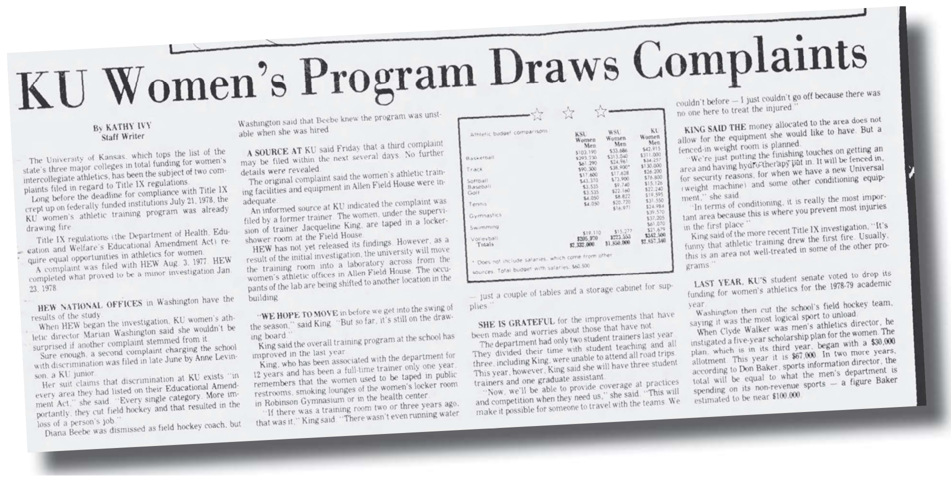
That long-shot bid featured her signature skills. And they were first learned when the "little jock" took up the cause of saving women's sports at the University of Kansas. Without the aid of a legal or political guru, she figured out how to build coalitions, attract publicity, and find common ground with potential allies—rather than dwell on their differences. She filed one of the first discrimination complaints on behalf of women athletes under the federal Title IX law. Although it took years, she prevailed.

All of her savvy would be required in struggles for Washington's paramount LGBTQ causes: domestic partnerships via Referendum 71, and its 2012 sequel, Referendum 74, where she was "the woman behind the curtain of marriage equality" in our state.

LEVINSON WON a scholarship, although it's tempting to put quotation marks around the term, to play field hockey at the University of Kansas. At 5 feet 3 inches, Levinson lettered in three high-school sports and was a prolific scorer in field hockey, although left-handed in a sport that only allows right-handed sticks. She was drawn to Kansas for several reasons, including that scholarship. It turned out to be the team's only one—$1,000, in toto, she recalls—and it would pass to her when she was a sophomore and the incumbent recipient had graduated.

After her freshman year, however, the university announced it was going to end funding for all women's sports except basketball.

She began figuring out how to stop the gutting. To draw attention to the cause, she enlisted women athletes to run a 30-mile, baton-passing relay from the KU campus in Lawrence to the state Capitol in Topeka. On the Capitol steps, the women removed a petition from the baton and handed it to the governor and female legislators. The feat garnered front-page attention in the *Kansas City Times*.



KU Women's Program Draws Complaints

By KATHY IVY
Staff Writer

The University of Kansas, which tops the list of the state's three major colleges in total funding for women's intercollegiate athletics, has been the subject of two complaints filed in regard to Title IX regulations.

Long before the deadline for compliance with Title IX crept up on federally funded institutions July 21, 1978, the KU women's athletic training program was already drawing fire.

Title IX regulations (the Department of Health, Education and Welfare's Educational Amendment Act) require equal opportunities in athletics for women.

A complaint was filed with HEW Aug. 3, 1977. HEW completed what proved to be a minor investigation Jan. 23, 1978.

HEW NATIONAL OFFICES in Washington have the results of the study.

When HEW began the investigation, KU women's athletic director Marian Washington said she wouldn't be surprised if another complaint stemmed from it.

Sure enough, a second complaint charging the school with discrimination was filed in late June by Anne Levinson, a KU junior.

Her suit claims that discrimination at KU exists "in every area they had listed on their Educational Amendment Act," she said. "Every single category. More importantly, they cut field hockey and that resulted in the loss of a person's job."

Diana Beebe was dismissed as field hockey coach, but Washington said that Beebe knew the program was unstable when she was hired.

A SOURCE AT KU said Friday that a third complaint may be filed within the next several days. No further details were revealed.

The original complaint said the women's athletic training facilities and equipment in Allen Field House were inadequate.

An informed source at KU indicated the complaint was filed by a former trainer. The women, under the supervision of trainer Jacqueline King, are taped in a locker-shower room at the Field House.

HEW has not yet released its findings. However, as a result of the initial investigation, the university will move the training room into a laboratory across from the women's athletic offices in Allen Field House. The occupants of the lab are being shifted to another location in the building.

"**WE HOPE TO MOVE** in before we get into the swing of the season," said King. "But so far, it's still on the drawing board."

King said the overall training program at the school has improved in the last year.

King, who has been associated with the department for 12 years and has been a full-time trainer only one year, remembers that the women used to be taped in public restrooms, smoking lounges of the women's locker room in Robinson Gymnasium or in the health center.

"If there was a training room two or three years ago, that was it," King said. "There wasn't even running water — just a couple of tables and a storage cabinet for supplies."

Athletic budget comparisons

	KSU Women Men	WSU Women Men	KU Women Men
	$103,190	$33,686	$42,915
Basketball	$293,230	$313,040	$311,000
	$61,290	$24,961	$34,257
Track	$90,300	$38,900*	$130,000
	$17,600	$17,628	$26,200
Softball	$43,370	$73,900	$76,800
Baseball	$3,535	$9,740	$15,126
Golf	$3,535	$22,160	$22,240
	$4,050	$8,822	$19,595
Tennis	$4,050	$20,720	$31,550
		$16,971	$24,984
Gymnastics			$39,570
			$37,205
Swimming			$61,070
	$19,110	$15,277	$21,679
Volleyball	$205,970	$223,553	$342,500
Totals	$2,332,000	$1,850,000	$2,857,340

* Does not include salaries, which come from other sources. Total budget with salaries: $60,500

SHE IS GRATEFUL for the improvements that have been made and worries about those that have not.

The department had only two student trainers last year. They divided their time with student teaching and all three, including King, were unable to attend all road trips.

This year, however, King said she will have three student trainers and one graduate assistant.

"Now, we'll be able to provide coverage at practices and competition when they need us," she said. "This will make it possible for someone to travel with the teams. We couldn't before — I just couldn't go off because there was no one here to treat the injured."

KING SAID THE money allocated to the area does not allow for the equipment she would like to have. But a fenced-in weight room is planned.

"We're just putting the finishing touches on getting an area and having hydro-therapy put in. It will be fenced in, for security reasons, for when we have a new Universal (weight machine) and some other conditioning equipment," she said.

"In terms of conditioning, it is really the most important area because this is where you prevent most injuries in the first place."

King said of the more recent Title IX investigation, "It's funny that athletic training drew the first fire. Usually, this is an area not well-treated in some of the other programs."

LAST YEAR, KU'S student senate voted to drop its funding for women's athletics for the 1978-79 academic year.

Washington then cut the school's field hockey team, saying it was the most logical sport to unload.

When Clyde Walker was men's athletics director, he instigated a five-year scholarship plan for the women. The plan, which is in its third year, began with a $30,000 allotment. This year it is $67,000. In two more years, according to Don Baker, sports information director, the total will be equal to what the men's department is spending on its non-revenue sports — a figure Baker estimated to be near $100,000.

Levinson sees a link between Title IX opponents and 2022 attacks on trans athletes: "It's just another way for intolerant folks to try and marginalize, diminish, ostracize people who are different from them for a wholly imagined set of harms." *Newspapers.com*

Within hours, state legislators voted to restore some funding to the university.

What's more, the baton brigade caught the eye of Elizabeth "Betty" Banks, a KU professor of art history.

Banks encouraged Levinson to file a Title IX complaint, which was something the student-athlete knew nothing about. Banks told her to research it. Title IX had been adopted as federal law in 1972 to ban gender discrimination in any educational institution receiving federal funds. It took three slow-walking years for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to craft rules for implementing the new law.

Levinson found funding disparities in every aspect of men's and women's sports at KU: scholarships, facilities, coaches' salaries and more. She filed a complaint in 1978. The federal Office of Civil Rights chose her claim to be among the first eight cases it would investigate for their broad implications.

Critics, including editorial writers at the student newspaper, said Title IX would effectively end men's sports by draining money away for women. Undeterred, investigators found discrimination and told KU to comply or lose up to $27 million in federal funding.

The university eventually came up with a multi-year plan to improve women's athletics. It was too late to benefit Levinson and her classmates, but it laid a foundation for all women student-athletes who followed.

ANNE LEVINSON was born in Topeka in 1958. Her parents were both New

Yorkers, whose grandparents were born in Eastern Europe. When Levinson's father was a boy, he immersed himself in reading as a way of escaping his family's poverty in their small town.

Harry Levinson found his way to Kansas State Teachers College. He served in the Army during World War II and "often tried to teach illiterate Army friends how to read," said his lengthy obituary in *The New York Times*. After the war, he married Roberta Freiman, and with his bride, he came back to Kansas to earn his doctorate in clinical psychology. He later worked at Topeka's Menninger Foundation, which became the country's largest training center for psychiatric professionals.

When Anne was 10, Harvard Business School hired her father, a renowned thinker on mental health and work. The Levinson family moved to a Boston suburb, Winchester, seven miles from Harvard Square. Neighboring cities included Woburn and Medford, or "Woo-bun" and "Meh-fah" in the local dialect.

Young Anne was definitely not in Kansas anymore. "I had a different accent. I had different clothes. I was not a big city girl."

She asked to try out for the boys' baseball team in junior high because girls didn't have a team. "I wasn't intentionally being a rabble-rouser but just wanting to play," she recalls. "The coach let me bat once and that was it."

Levinson shooting on goal in field hockey.
Anne Levinson

A "late bloomer" on other fronts, she says she "got pure joy out of the athletics and the opportunity to do something fun with a group of people." She played point guard in basketball, where her chief strength was scoping out the court and dishing the ball to teammates in scoring position. She was a dashing forward in field hockey. "It was my preferred sport because it was fast-paced and strategic. It was like ice hockey without hitting each other."

She didn't realize it at the time, but her parents—who later divorced—had exposed her to the Jewish tradition of *tikkun olam*, or mending the world. "NPR was always on the car radio," she recalls. Her parents often had dinner guests who were engaged in political or community activism. That seeped in. And *tikkun olam* "must have stuck, because that clearly has been in my DNA since I've grown up."

HER TITLE IX advocacy aroused her interest in studying law. Despite her father's connections at Harvard, she didn't see it as her community. She was drawn to Northeastern University. Founded in a YMCA at the turn of the 20th century, Northeastern was a Boston college for working people. NU's uber-urban "campus" was closer to diverse neighborhoods such as Roxbury than it was to rowing shells gliding on the Charles River. Its subterranean classrooms shook when old trolleys screeched and rattled down the middle of Huntington Avenue, the school's lifeline.

When the first same-sex marriage licenses were issued in Boston, sharpshooters on the roof of City Hall protected attorney Mary Bonauto, who Barney Frank called "our Thurgood Marshall." *Freedomtomarry.org*

NU Law School was known for producing public-interest attorneys. It admitted women 28 years before Harvard. Levinson's contemporaries at the school included Urvashi Vaid, later National Gay and Lesbian Task Force leader, and Mary Bonauto, who won a 2003 breakthrough case for same-sex marriage in Massachusetts. ("Our Thurgood Marshall," gay Congressman Barney Frank called Bonauto.)

Students were required to alternate course work with externships overseen by attorneys. One of Levinson's "co-ops," as Northeastern calls them, took her to Colorado to clerk for Justice Jean Dubofsky, the first woman and youngest person to sit on that state's Supreme Court. After later stepping down from the high court, Dubofsky was the lead attorney in a 1996 LGBTQ victory, *Romer v. Evans*, at the U.S. Supreme Court.

For her last co-op, Levinson jumped at an opportunity in the Seattle City Attorney's Office, working on anti-discrimination law. She didn't even glimpse Lake Washington through the persistent drizzle, but she saw "what a progressive and welcoming city Seattle was for women and for LGBTQ folks and that sealed the deal for me." She moved out in the spring of 1983, and passed the bar exam that summer. Soon she journeyed to Iowa for foot-soldier duty in the presidential campaign of U.S. Senator Alan Cranston, a California Democrat, who wanted to abolish nuclear weapons.

CALLED A "bald craggy-looking, none-too-charismatic man," Cranston won just 7 percent in Iowa's first-in-the-country sweepstakes. Levinson and other

campaigners were cut loose without so much as bus fare out of Cedar Rapids. White House incumbent Ronald Reagan went on to pummel Walter Mondale in a November landslide.

Her idealism still intact, Levinson volunteered for the re-election campaign of Seattle Mayor Charley Royer. She recalls piling into a colleague's station wagon and making cassette recordings of many debates between Royer and his challenger Norm Rice, a City Council stalwart. Royer won and hired her at City Hall.

In the mayor's office she worked alongside Cal Anderson, who was Royer's scheduler. Anderson had come out to his parents while he was in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. In his groundbreaking 1987 campaign for state representative, Anderson "didn't run as an LGBT candidate, but as a candidate who happened to be gay," Levinson says.

Seattle was trailblazing in its mid-1970s adoption of laws that prohibited discrimination against gays in housing and employment. Anderson urged forming a group that would press legislators to adopt a statewide law like Seattle's. Since 1949, Washington had a law forbidding discrimination on the grounds of race, religion and gender, but it was silent on sexual orientation and gender identity. Advocates had been trying to change that since 1977 to no avail.

Anderson, Levinson, Charlie Brydon and a handful of others, created a political action committee, the Privacy Fund. "We called it that out of fear that if we used the l-word or the g-word we wouldn't get support," Levinson says. Bobbe Bridge, later a state Supreme Court justice, was hired as the organization's lobbyist.

Levinson became one of the state's first public officials to come out. "There wasn't a dance party," she says. "I just let it be known and started working on these things in a very visible way.

"And it was clear we needed to be visible, we needed to be out—that it was going to be harder for people to hate us if they knew us. And it would certainly make it harder for other people to watch or sit to the side and not support us."

TO LEVINSON'S SURPRISE, when Norm Rice was elected mayor in 1989, he reached out to hire her. As Royer's liaison on public safety—the powder keg of mayoral politics—she had often shuttled down a City Hall back stairway from the mayor's office to negotiate with Rice, the City Council's leader on policing issues. "I was not expecting him to think of me in a positive way after all of those battles," she recalls.

She ended up staying for both of Rice's terms, serving as his legal counsel,

Levinson calmed activists from AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power who occupied the mayor's office in 1990. The AIDS crisis created a "real community," she says, with "gay men and lesbians working in the trenches side by side." *MOHAI, Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection*

chief of staff, deputy mayor and arm-twister.

"City policy, simply put, works like this: Rice has an idea. Levinson figures out how to get it done," said a story in *The Seattle Times* headlined, "Anne of the thousand details."

Their accomplishments ranged from developing some of the country's first transitional housing run by the homeless to recruiting the city's first professional women's basketball team, the Seattle Reign.

Levinson worked with such focus that Rice said "others might think she's impersonal."

On the LGBTQ front, the City Council had taken a progressive step in 1989 by creating domestic partnerships for city employees. Straight and gay workers could use their sick leave to care for a live-in partner, or attend the funeral of a partner—a benefit equal to what married employees enjoyed.

Christian conservatives, aided by retired state Supreme Court Justice William Goodloe, filed an initiative challenging the policy as a threat to traditional families.

In 1990, Levinson, a self-described "workaholic," spent evenings and weekends campaigning for Rice's innovative $69 million Families and Education tax levy, which she had helped craft, and against Initiative 35.

I-35 sought to repeal the leave benefits that applied to 4 percent of the city's

workforce. To oppose it, Levinson assembled a coalition of the city's business establishment, labor unions, LGBTQ community, and religious leaders.

The Seattle Times editorial page—later a cheerleader for marriage equality—argued for overturning the benefits. *The Times* cited their cost as prohibitive.

Seattle voters disagreed; 58 percent voted to keep the benefits. Levinson detected a pattern: Gay-rights opponents seemed to think they were victimized by granting equality to others.

A NEW THREAT arose from the south in the early 1990s. Christian conservatives in the Oregon Citizens Alliance had overturned anti-discrimination protections for gay employees in state government. With hellfire rhetoric, the OCA followed up with Measure 9 in 1992. It would have amended Oregon's constitution to declare homosexuality "perverse," on par with pedophilia, and ineligible for any "special rights."

In what was considered the most divisive campaign in Oregon history, Measure 9 was rejected by 57 percent of the voters.

Extremists united LGBTQ advocates and allies, says Levinson, who once thanked opponents, "because your cruelty, and your over-reaching, and your lack of humanity, and compassion, it helped us." *Western Washington University*

Undaunted, OCA leader Lon Mabon came to Seattle in 1993, declared "there is a war going on" and revealed plans to create a Washington branch.

LGBT leaders in Washington anticipated such a move. In a pre-emptive strike, Seattle activist Charlie Brydon had locked up the name Washington Citizens Alliance before Mabon could get it. "We just bought it so they couldn't use it," Levinson says. She expected bruising combat against Mabon. She suggested branding their campaign "Hands Off Washington."

"The idea was to say, 'Look, here are these outsiders trying to come into our state, telling you that you need to discriminate against your fellow Washingtonians. And we're not going to put up with that, right?' "

Levinson wanted to make sure allies were visible. A "Hands Off" logo could be plastered on bumpers, coffee mugs, t-shirts, and more. "We gave them to businesses. We had them in churches. People were able to show their support for us,

24 hours a day," she says, "and in a very affordable way."

Mabon and his allies proposed initiatives 608 and 610 in 1994. Together, those would ban anti-discrimination laws protecting gays, prohibit schools from positively depicting homosexuality, and stop LGBT couples from adopting, fostering or having custody of kids.

Deputy Mayor Levinson, far right, walks behind Mayor Norm Rice (waving) in the 1993 Seattle Pride Parade. Norm Stamper would be the city's first police chief to march in the parade the next year. *Seattle Municipal Archives*

Levinson organized a press conference in Clark County for business and civic leaders—near Oregon and far from Seattle—to register their opposition to Mabon. She asked Seattle Police Chief Norm Stamper to march in the Pride Parade, in uniform, with Mayor Rice, followed by Fire Department trucks. It was the first time Seattle police participated in the parade. Hands Off Washington fought to keep the measures from getting to voters with a "decline to sign" movement and TV ads before their opponents even qualified for the ballot.

Christian conservatives failed to gather enough signatures for their initiatives. They blamed the "Gay Klux Klan."

The Seattle Times named Levinson one of the "power gay leaders" in the state, and added, "Her record as an effective, behind-the-scenes facilitator is unsurpassed in local government."

"THIS IS THE FIRST selfish thing I've done in seven years," Levinson said in late 1996, stepping away from City Hall. At 38, she said it was "time to get a life." Rice, nicknamed "Mayor Nice," said, "I've been known to burn a lot of people out."

If that was Levinson's condition, it didn't stick. Governor Gary Locke appointed her the following year to head the state's regulation of energy and telecommunications industries. In his announcement, Locke lined up praise for Levinson from business executives, leading Latino activist Roberto Maestas and her old friend, Bobbe Bridge, then a King County Superior Court judge. "She is always unflappable, fair and has a good sense of humor," Bridge said. Levinson's stint as a utilities' regulator would prove instrumental when she later negotiated a deal to keep the WNBA's Storm from being taken to Oklahoma with the Sonics.

But Levinson held the post in Locke's cabinet less than two years before Se-

attle Mayor Paul Schell tapped her for another challenge. She took a pay cut to become Honorable Judge Levinson of the Seattle Municipal Court.

She didn't settle into a robed career, however. Instead, like Justice Dubofsky in Colorado, Levinson found herself itching to get back to advocacy. "I really missed community activism and as a judge you are foreclosed from all of that. And I really hadn't given that a lot of thought when I said 'yes' to being a judge."

She even felt guilty about sitting on the bench with all that was going on. Vermont had approved civil unions for same-sex couples and the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts legalized marriage equality.

Seeing a grave threat, Christian conservatives mobilized on offense. Karl Rove, chief strategist for President George W. Bush, saw a chance to boost Bush's sagging support among evangelical voters. Rove orchestrated campaigns in 11 states to constitutionally ban same-sex marriage in 2004. All of them succeeded.

Nevertheless, optimism gripped Washington's LGBTQ community 15 months later. After trying for 29 years in Olympia, advocates finally thought they might have the votes in the Legislature to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the state's anti-discrimination law.

The previous year's drive fell one vote short in the state Senate. When senators took up the bill on Friday, January 27, "activity in the Capitol all but halted." Galleries overlooking the Senate were packed. Debate was long and emotional. State Senator Ed Murray, the leading gay rights advocate in the Legislature, watched in the wings alongside his longtime partner Michael Shiosaki.

Senator Bill Finkbeiner, a King County Republican, rose to speak against discrimination. "We don't choose who we love. The heart chooses who we love," he said, changing his position to cast the decisive vote in a 25-23 tally.

A celebration was held that night in the lobby of Seattle's Paramount Theatre. Its marquee said: "Now Playing – A Victory for Equality." After a slide show and speeches, Louisa Jenkins, an auto mechanic, stood among the crowd rocking her infant to Pat Benatar's "Love Is a Battlefield."

George Bakan, publisher of *Seattle Gay News*, expected the long-sought vic-

Seattle Gay News publisher George Bakan predicted a "dogfight" after state lawmakers passed an anti-discrimination law in 2006, celebrated by a marquee, and conservatives vowed to overturn it. *Anne Levinson*

tory to be challenged by the right in what would be the "dogfight of the year."

What Bakan hadn't anticipated was who would be leading the other side's pack.

BEFORE GOVERNOR Chris Gregoire even signed the new law, Tim Eyman announced he would try to repeal it at the ballot. The watch salesman known for anti-tax initiatives was veering into another lane.

Levinson took on the challenge of leading a team against Eyman. Washington Won't Discriminate was created in the model of the "Hands Off" campaign, with chapters around the state, familiar faces talking to newspaper editorial boards, and known allies to enlist for "decline to sign" canvassing.

Levinson had learned from earlier battles. "Each time they attacked us, it helped us in the long run because we were better prepared, more strategic, the public was more educated. And we had stronger coalitions."

Editorial boards condemned Eyman's misleading "high-octane" rhetoric about quotas and preferential treatment for gays. The *Tacoma News Tribune* called his ploy "reprehensible." Others, from *The Walla Walla Union-Bulletin* to the *Yakima Herald-Republic*, joined in the berating.

Washington's highest court delivered a crushing blow to marriage equality in 2006. On the brighter side, Tim Eyman failed in his effort to repeal the state's anti-discrimination law. *Anne Levinson*

Eyman and his Christian cohorts needed 112,400 valid signatures to qualify for a statewide referendum—which meant a ballot choice to "approve" or "reject" the existing law. With that effort lagging, Eyman trumpeted "Referendum Sunday," calling for voters in 5,400 churches to cancel "preferential treatment" for LGBT people.

With the deadline for submitting signatures closing in, Eyman appeared at the Secretary of State's Office in a Darth Vader costume, toting a plastic light saber instead of petitions.

Eyman said he was waiting for more to come in from Spokane and he'd be back the next day. But when the last signatures trickled in before the 5 p.m. final bell, Eyman looked at the thin stack and muttered, "Jesus." The remark "only highlighted the bizarre marriage of convenience that has existed between Eyman and the religious right over the last few months," wrote journalist Eli Sanders.

Gary Randall, president of the Faith & Freedom Network, was so frustrated

that he "maneuvered out of a television-camera shot that seemed to have both him and Eyman in it, later scolding the camerawoman for picturing the two of them together."

The dogfight that *Seattle Gay News* had envisioned ended with a whimper from backbiting foes. Voters had made up their minds: "They declined to sign," said *The Seattle Times*.

Washington became the 17th state with laws protecting sexual orientation and the seventh to protect transgender people.

GIDDINESS ABOUT Eyman's over-reaching was soon shattered. In Olympia's Temple of Justice, the state Supreme Court ruled, 5-4, that there was a "rational basis" for the Legislature's ban on same-sex marriage.

Not long after the Court's "terrible" 2006 decision, Levinson felt pulled to another cause. The Seattle Sonics and Storm were sold to a group of Oklahoma investors led by Clay Bennett, who were soon vilified in Washington. With all the focus on the NBA franchise, it looked like no one was trying to keep the women's team in Seattle.

A Storm fan, Levinson began poking around in early 2007 and kept hearing "it couldn't be done." She was told Bennett was fed up with how he and his partners had been demonized and sued by local officials. And he wasn't interested in talking to anyone in Washington.

Levinson invited legendary Latino activist Roberto Maestas to join her courtside for a 2010 WNBA Finals game. "Anne holds a special place in my heart for doing something so kind and special for Roberto," said his widow, Estela Ortega. An avid fan, he died weeks later. *Anne Levinson*

Bennett and his partners were also Republicans. Some had contributed to anti-LGBTQ causes and candidates. "Couldn't have been more different than me and the work I had done," she says.

She turned the prism. In Oklahoma, Bennett and his partners were civic leaders. They raised money for the state fair, and for a memorial to 168 lives lost in an Oklahoma City bombing by right-wing extremists. Bennett's crew had a history of other good deeds. At home they were local heroes, not plundering vandals.

But how to open a back channel to Bennett?

Levinson had a connection. Jim Roth was a regulator on Oklahoma's utilities commission. He was also openly gay and she knew him from their mutual work for the Victory Fund, a national LGBTQ political group. She asked Roth if he'd be willing to vouch to Bennett that she was fair and honest, and not one of the folks making his life miserable.

Roth said he'd give it a shot.

Based on Roth's reference, Bennett agreed to talk. Beforehand, Levinson scoured his past, looking for common ground. That was something she learned in her Title IX quest. She had found male allies who didn't care much about women's sports but were troubled by glaring unfairness. And in finding those commonalities, she learned that some differences with others didn't make them bad or mean-spirited. Bennett had grown up in the Midwest, like her, and had gone to a state school, OU, while she was at KU. He was private and not self-promoting. He was raised by a Jewish mother. He and his wife owned a book store. He had a record of civic duty.

"He knew I was a lesbian. He knew I was a liberal Democrat," she says. But once they got talking, "we laughed about our differences and what we had in common."

Levinson, hailed as "the calm that saved the Storm," and co-owners Dawn Trudeau, Ginny Gilder, and Lisa Brummel. *The Seattle Times*

Operating in secrecy, she approached three local women who were Storm fans with the financial resources she lacked. She asked if they'd be willing to buy the team if she could find a way to save it. She was blunt. She put her chance of success at about 5 percent. They agreed to go for it.

For a face-to-face meeting with Bennett, she suggested a neutral site: Portland. They could negotiate at a hotel, and take a break to wander the stacks at nearby Powell's Books.

Levinson worked solo on probably the most difficult transaction of her career. She had to untangle the business affairs of the Storm, which were intertwined with the Sonics, but very much subordinate to the NBA team. She had to find a new practice facility and offices for the Storm. She also needed to strike an arena deal with the city of Seattle because the Storm's lease was set to expire in 2007.

And that feat looked more like a half-court heave than a dunk. Jilted Seat-

tleites had passed Initiative 91 which mandated that the city could not subsidize deals with team owners; it had to receive market value. She hurdled those obstacles and more: helping Oklahoma get its own WNBA franchise and haggling down the Storm's $10 million purchase-price.

The Storm's new owners were unveiled in January 2008. Levinson was part of the quartet, along with Lisa Brummel, Ginny Gilder and Dawn Trudeau, accomplished businesswomen who had put up the money to buy the team. Levinson became the group's initial chairperson, similar to Bennett's position among his Oklahoma partners.

"We knew the right thing to do for Seattle was to work with Anne's group to see if we could make this happen," Bennett said at the time.

Levinson was hailed as "the calm that saved the Storm." She and Governor Gregoire were named grand marshals for the 2008 Seattle Pride Parade.

AFTER WAVING, royally, from the back of a parade convertible, Grand Marshal Levinson was soon handed the keys to saving the marriage movement in Washington.

After waving royally, from the back of a parade convertible, Grand Marshal Levinson was handed the keys in 2009 to saving the marriage movement in Washington. *Anne Levinson*

After the state Supreme Court's crushing decision in 2006, advocates turned to another strategy. Led by Ed Murray and Rep. Jamie Pedersen, they pursued a legislative approach to secure domestic partnership rights. Pedersen, a Seattle Democrat, identified hundreds of instances in state law where marital status affected basic rights, such as hospital visitations, community property, and inheritance rights. Those rights were organized into three buckets. Murray and Pedersen began sponsoring bills over three consecutive years that conferred a triad of benefits to domestic partners.

Gregoire signed the last of the domestic partnership bills, called "everything but marriage," in May 2009, and opponents announced they would try to repeal it in November via Referendum 71.

The struggle for marriage rights had taken a devastating turn in 2008. In California, an alliance of Mormon, Catholic and Protestant clergy, aided by a

keen strategist, had reported raising so many campaign contributions in early October that the Secretary of State's website crashed. They made education their battleground. In mailings and ads, the Proposition 8 campaign warned that children would be indoctrinated by a pro-gay curriculum if their measure was not approved.

"Mom, guess what I learned in school today?" a little girl said in one spot. "I learned how a prince married a prince." A voice-over said: "Teaching about gay marriage will happen unless we pass Proposition 8."

Research showed the message swayed voters who had "live and let live" beliefs—as long as those did not have serious implications for society.

Barack Obama won California by 3.2 million votes that year. Like Governor Chris Gregoire he wasn't ready to support marriage equality yet. At the same time, the Golden State banned same-sex marriage by a 600,000-vote margin.

With the forecast choppy at best in Washington, Levinson led a new statewide coalition, Washington Families Standing Together trying to accomplish what no one had—a statewide vote to legally recognize LGBTQ families. (Only courts and legislatures had approved civil unions and same-sex marriage in states such as Vermont and Massachusetts.)

"If you look at the national landscape," Levinson says, "for people working in the movement, there was a huge concern that if we lost this, it would set back things everywhere, not just in Washington state."

Building on 2006, she quickly brought together business, labor, faith and other groups in Washington. Levinson's team organized volunteers to oversee signature verification by the Secretary of State's Office in Olympia every day during the summer. They filed a challenge, claiming opponents' technical errors kept them from having enough valid signatures to qualify R71 for the ballot.

Conservatives said disclosing names of people who signed their initiative petitions would lead to harassment. Secretary of State Sam Reed and Attorney General Rob McKenna took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, arguing the names should be public. The high court agreed, 8-1. *Washington Secretary of State*

But a Thurston County judge decided against them. Opponents cleared the threshold by 1,400 signatures. Levinson scrambled on the election front with just two months to go. "The numbers were not with us, and if we didn't do everything

just right, we were going to lose."

DESPITE HER DISCOMFORT with the spotlight, Levinson faced off against opponents before editorial boards and on the airwaves. Her discipline was needed. "One of the reasons people wanted me out front was because I had an ability to stay calm and respectful. Or, to keep in mind that we're not trying to win the debate. I wanted folks to look at me and say, 'Oh that could be my niece, or daughter, or neighbor. Look at how they're attacking her, that's just not right.' "

Similar thinking applied when Levinson wanted to produce homegrown TV ads. Some in her camp pushed to feature young faces. If they don't like us, tough, they'd argue.

"And I would say, 'Sorry guys, but the polling shows that women just do better for folks still concerned about LGBTQ stuff. And older women do even better, because people don't like the idea that two older women who are living together can't look out for each other in health care.' "

She organized a TV commercial featuring two retirees (and grand dames of the movement), Jane Abbott Lighty and Pete-e Petersen in their West Seattle backyard. "And I had them talk about how they lived their lives together and Pete-e had been an Air Force nurse. And all they wanted to do was make sure if one of them needed something the other could be there. They could have medical care."

In an "off-year" election without national or state races, 2009 turnout would be lower. And it would tilt towards older voters, who tended to lean conservative. That was another reason to showcase Jane and Pete-e.

The big church money that propelled Prop. 8's $40 million campaign in California never materialized in Washington. The election-drive for domestic partners raised $2.2 million compared to $500,000 reported by opponents.

Referendum 71 was approved with 53 percent. Levinson and the coalition had cleared a runway for flight in 2012.

AFTER NEW YORK LEGALIZED marriage equality in 2011, the movement regained altitude. In 2012, marriage equality would be on the ballot in Washington, along with Maine, Maryland and Minnesota.

The California debacle had been thoroughly examined under a new lens. Advocates began to deeply explore the question of why voters, especially those in the "muddled middle," weren't keen on same-sex marriage. This led advocates toward "deep canvassing" that would be deployed in Washington. In a radical

Levinson recommended the marriage-equality campaign make Jennifer Cast (left, with her partner and their twins) its chief fundraiser. One of Amazon's first employees, Cast received a $2.5 million contribution from Jeff and MacKenzie Bezos. *Freedom to Marry*

departure from conventional politics, field workers would stay at the doorsteps of "micro-targeted" voters to talk at length about their feelings and questions. Oregon researchers Thalia Zepatos and Lisa Grove showed that many Americans were on a journey to understanding same-sex marriage. And having "the conversation" with gay relatives, neighbors or their supporters was often pivotal.

Levinson, by then, had a new job, one of the toughest in Seattle. Mayor Mike McGinn appointed her the civilian expert to review how the police department handled misconduct complaints—at a time when the city's officers had come under a federal order to remedy their pattern of using excessive force against minorities.

The marriage equality campaign would be run by a full-time professional manager, Zach Silk. Levinson would advise and head the legal team. She turned over her 2009 playbook to Silk and recommended he put Jennifer Cast on the point for fundraising. One of Amazon's first employees, Cast would prove crucial. She solicited Jeff Bezos for a contribution that summer, saying, frankly, she and her family needed people like him to step up. Bezos and his wife, MacKenzie, donated $2.5 million, by far the largest check the campaign received. (Opponents would raise $2.8 million in all, and were outspent five-to-one.)

"It is, I think, fair to say that were it not for Washington's decades-long success we wouldn't be where we are in the country," says Zach Silk, the R74 campaign manager. *Zach Silk*

With the homestretch approaching, Levinson—confined to her couch after a biking accident—had a brainstorm. If we win, she realized, state and national attention will be focused on us. Given their different dates for implementing new marriage laws, Washington would hold weddings before other victorious 2012 states. Building on newfound public support, how could those first weddings advance the cause?

Levinson wanted to deliver on the campaign's promises of love and devotion. "But I was realizing at the same time that we still had a really significant public education, media education strategy that was needed," she recalls. "Remember, this was all still considered pretty radical, a pretty dramatic change. But also, we had clerk's offices—the people who deal with marriage licenses—we had secretaries of state, we had religious institutions, we had all of these different entities who were like, 'what is going to happen with 'X?' And we had all of these couples who wanted to know, 'If it does pass can I get married right away? Oh, there's a waiting period? Oh, you have to apply—how does that work?"

Levinson wanted to showcase the first legal marriages for the media. Above is the lobby of Benaroya Hall just after Levinson officiated the wedding of Jane Abbott Lighty and Pete-e Petersen. *Anne Levinson*

Levinson had question-and-answer guides prepared for county clerks and other officials. She put together volunteer "SWAT" teams in each county where she had asked diverse couples, known in their communities, to participate in the first registrations and marriages in different parts of the state. Volunteers would also help reporters and photojournalists prepare. And in places where the media might not attend, volunteers would capture video, audio and photos to distribute on social media.

After marriage equality won 54 percent in Washington, Levinson set out to direct scenes with a wide frame and deep focus.

"We would overwhelm them with images and stories and interviews and background that reinforced everything we'd been saying for so many years. This was it. These were people's lives. And because they voted the way we asked them to, everybody's lives were now changed for the better."

Consonant with the campaign's central message, she wanted to depict marriage equality as shoring up an institution of stability, not taking anything away.

Her storyboard featured long-term couples. In the state's largest media market that would translate into a midnight show on December 6—the first chance for licensing—at the King County Courthouse. Matriarchs Jane Abbott Lighty and Pete-e Petersen would be the first recipients. In Thurston County, the first

license went to Lisa Brodoff and Lynn Grotsky, who had been together 32 years. The *BBC*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and *USA Today* covered the ceremonies.

As a judge, Mary Yu was prohibited from politicking. So Yu officiated adoptions by LGBTQ couples, such as Emily and Sarah Cofer, the first same-sex couple married in Seattle—by Yu. *Barb Kinney*

Licensing was a rehearsal for marriages that would be consummated after the state's three-day waiting period, at the stroke of December 9th. Levinson had been talking with King County Superior Court Judge Mary Yu, who wanted to officiate the first marriages at 12:01 a.m. Plans were set in motion for Yu's courtroom, and others around the state.

Sarah and Emily Cofer, two public-school teachers, were the first in line for Judge Yu. Just out of the camera shot, Levinson held their 9-month-old daughter during the ceremony.

Yu's crew officiated until 7 am. Then a second shift would start at Seattle City Hall a few hours later. Volunteer judges were stationed around the spacious lobby, far enough apart, so that each couple would appear in their own shots, giving the ceremonies a personal feel. Then, couples would exit down the half-block sloping staircase outside City Hall, where friends, family and supporters could shower them with flowers and applause. It was the chef's kiss of photo ops.

Seattle journalist Dominic Holden, later, national LGBTQ reporter for *BuzzFeed*, called Levinson, "The woman behind the curtain of marriage equality this year."

RUNNING ON ADRENALINE, Levinson readied for a grand finale. Later that day, the beloved Seattle Men's Chorus would perform its annual holiday show at a sold-out Benaroya Hall. The concert drew audiences young and old, gay and straight, and for many it was a family tradition.

Dennis Coleman, the chorus director and conductor, had been thinking about the important message it would send if the chorus could host one of the state's first same-sex marriages. He asked the Men's Chorus and Women's Chorus to each select a couple. Maestro Levinson would officiate.

The event unfolded this way: Just before intermission of the Men's Chorus performance, conductor Coleman asked the audience to remain seated. Stashed backstage, the Women's Chorus came out and stood with the Men's Chorus.

Levinson was introduced. A trellis was wheeled out. Levinson supplied a little history before Jane Abbott and Pete-e Petersen, both aglow, exchanged vows and rings. The crowd whooped and whistled when Levinson said "by the authority *now vested* in me by the state of Washington."

They stood, clapped, hugged and cried when the wedded couples came off the stage and walked down an aisle to the lobby. The audience joined them there in celebrating the intermission with 3,000 wedding cupcakes.

On the first day of marriages, Conductor Dennis Coleman suggested the Seattle Men's Chorus host a ceremony during a sold-out holiday show at Benaroya Hall. *Anne Levinson*

Public opinion had shifted. It was not going back.

In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the federal Defense of Marriage Act in the case of *U.S. vs. Windsor.* Edie Windsor and Thea Spyer had lived together as a couple since 1968. Their marriage in Canada was recognized by New York. After Spyer died in 2009, Windsor sought a spousal exemption to federal taxes on her inheritance of Spyer's estate.

In a 5-4 decision on June 26, 2013, the high court ruled that the federal Defense of Marriage Act deprived gay people of equal liberty protected by the Fifth Amendment.

Two years later, to the day, the Supreme Court issued a decision in the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

Ohio residents James Obergefell and his ailing partner, John Arthur, were married in Maryland, so that when Arthur died from Lou Gehrig's disease, Obergefell would be his surviving spouse. In another 5-4 decision, Justice Anthony Kennedy again wrote for the majority. Under the due process and equal protection clauses of the 14th Amendment, Kennedy declared that same-sex couples were entitled to marry.

Zach Silk, the manager of Washington's campaign for marriage equality, says the long-time dedication of Levinson and others created an infrastructure for success. Referendum 71 was "extraordinarily" important as a trial run for how to organize against attacks on relationship recognition. And he credits much of his 2012 success—and its larger impact—to Levinson's playbook.

"It is, I think, fair to say that were it not for Washington's decades-long success we wouldn't be where we are in the country."

Gregoire considered Levinson an adviser, albeit an exacting one, at times, pushing the governor to do "everything humanly possible" for the cause. "She's not going to sugarcoat anything. OK? She's going to be very straightforward and honest. And challenging. But that's just Anne."

When dealing with an issue as significant as marriage equality, Gregoire says, "having that personality is gold."

A POLICY OMNIVORE, Levinson likes to tackle interlocking and seemingly intractable issues. After marriage equality, she focused on matters such as child welfare (co-chairing a governor's blue-ribbon panel), domestic violence and firearms (advocating "extreme risk protection orders"), and daylighting "dark money" in Washington's political system (pushing reforms as leader of the state's Public Disclosure Commission). One reporter called her a "polymath of politics, business, and law."

"Anne is one of the great civic leaders in Washington state, in any number of domains," says Silk, the R74 campaign manager.

While some activists seek publicity or "status amplification," he says, Levinson is very aware that hunting the spotlight often doesn't get the work done—and can impede it. Because of her work ethic, people are eager to "welcome her" to their cause.

"She's got her fingerprints on a lot of very consequential things that make Washington a civic innovator, just really an innovative state."

Bob Young