Dick Levy, 1944-2009

Richard C. Levy died February 24 of complications due to cancer surgery. He was at age 64. Levy had been out since 1967 when he was a graduate student at Michigan State University. He moved to Oregon to teach at the University of Portland. Levy was one of the founding members of the Portland Town Council, an early gay rights organization here. Levy once went to work as an aide to conservative Multnomah County Commissioner Gordon Shadburn. Levy's gay friends were aghast, but he responded that it was an attempt to "work from inside." But Shadburn's conservative supporters eventually pressured the commissioner to oust the homosexual. Later Shadburn lost his political career after it was revealed that he had relations with young gay men. Levy helped raise funds for numerous gay causes, including Basic Rights Oregon and the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center. Levy and his partner of 39 years, Larry Hobnet, were among the first gay couples to marry and to register as domestic partners in Multnomah County. Mayor Vera Katz and county chair Beverly Stein were their witnesses. Levy was a college professor, a Multnomah County Commissioner in 1984 and real estate broker during his more than 40 years in Portland. Beyond his leadership in the gay community, Levy was active in business and neighborhood issues and was honored by the city with the 1998 Spirit of Portland award. Mayor Sam Adams recalled Levy as "tough and funny and tireless in his work to improve Portland for all Portlanders."

Born in the Bronx and raised in a retail environment where both parents worked in a fabric store for more than 30 years in New York, Levy also was a former retail store manager. Levy received a bachelor's degree from Harpur College/SUNY at Binghamton and masters degree from Michigan State University. Since 1988 he was a commercial real estate sales and leasing broker. He started with Bluestone Realty and helped form North Rim Realty in 1999. He acquired a Windermere franchise in 2004 and with Craig Gilbert formed PDX Metro Commercial LLC / Windermere Community Commercial Realty. He was active in the Commercial Association of Realtors, Northeast Business Boosters, Hollywood Business Association and CCIM. He had served several stints as president of the Irvington Community Association – most recently from 2006 to 2008. Among his civic activities were being a founding member of the Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations; chair of the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods; member of the Martin Luther King Blvd. Advisory Committee; vice chair of the Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal Advisory Committee; and vice chair of Ethos Music Academy.

Levy also was active in numerous political campaigns and had been a delegate to the Oregon Democratic Central Committee and a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 2000.
An open house celebrating Dick Levy’s life will be held 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 14, 2009, at 2830 NE Regents Dr., Portland.
Memorial donations in Dick Levy’s name to support the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center’s programs for gay youth support, recreation and counseling may be sent to: SMYRC, 2100 SE Belmont St., Portland, OR 97214. E-mail: info@smyrc.org