



REP. TINA KOTEK SUPERHEROES RISING

Over six fast-moving years, Tina Kotek has carved a sharply rising arc in Salem, driven by razor-sharp intelligence, compassion, and a deep capacity for practical political work. When asked what she's into beyond politics though, she responds with "silent films", "superheroes", and ... "a Democratic majority in Salem."

Ummm, a tightly focused political geek into spandex-wrapped warriors for good? Awesome! We had to know more.

Tina dropped out of Georgetown University to move across country and "be who you want to be" in Oregon, where she walked her first Pride Parade in 1987, "back when everyone would jump in." Typically, coming out was harder for her than her family, with her Mom commenting, "well, it took you long enough."

Political activism didn't start until graduate school at the University of Washington, spurred by her response to anti-LGBT discrimination. Tina and her partner at the time applied for married student housing, but were denied, even though they were registered as domestic partners under the weak law available at that time in Washington. She got mad. Not just mad, though: mad and organized. She helped build and lead a coalition all the way to Olympia. By the end of the fight, LGBT faculty and students across the Washington University system had equal housing and insurance rights. Tina herself had all that, plus a Master's Degree in International Studies, and her first elected role as president of the graduate student government. She was hooked.

She ran her first public race in 2004, for Oregon House District 43, in inner Northeast Portland. Or, to be specific, Aimee Wilson ran the race as Tina's campaign manager, while Tina served as door-knocker and policy wonk. Tina lost that race, but

won Aimee's heart, and the two have been together ever since. They were among the first to register as domestic partners once Tina helped drive the Oregon Family Fairness Act through Salem in 2007.

While she very proudly represents the solidly blue House District 44, covering much of North Portland and St Johns, when asked if she also represents the LGBT community in Salem, she readily says, "Yes, I do." She says her district "...has many, many gay households, but when we get LGBT issues in Salem from anywhere, that's my job too. I believe any person of color would feel the same way, because we don't have a lot of diversity in Salem."

While work remains, Tina played very significant roles in landing three solid wins for LGBT Oregon: the Oregon Family Fairness Act, the Oregon Equality Act, and recent enhancements to Oregon's laws protecting against bullying in schools. Notably, alongside the Democratic Party of Oregon, she proudly championed protection for "gender identity" as well as "sexual orientation" in the Oregon Equality Act. She continues to do so, because even some lesbian and gay people forget the critical importance of the "T" in the "LGBT" coalition, and that gender identity and sexual orientation are complementary, not identical, aspects of the human experience.

Because Tina is an even bigger political policy wonk than her stunt double, Rachel Maddow, she carries particular passion for health-care policy, because healthcare is an issue which touches absolutely everyone. She's working alongside a broad coalition pushing to make cultural competency education, including LGBT culture, available to healthcare workers; because doctors provide better care when they understand their patient's life. She also sees a need to work with Oregon's Department of Human Services (DHS) to recruit and improve foster care for LGBT homeless youth, even in the face of strapped resources, given the very high percentage of homeless youth who reach the streets due to anti-LGBT discrimination at home. And, while full marriage equality for Oregon must

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