

Union candidate drops out of Oregon House race ... after McDonald's franchise owner gets leader support

By Don McIntosh
Associate editor

In our March 18 issue, in a story about union members who are running for office, I reported that nurses union activist Adrienne Enghouse, who competes in ironman triathlons, was “ready to go the distance” in a Democratic primary race in House District 51 in Clackamas. Unfortunately, that was out-of-date by the time the issue hit the printer.

Unknown to me, Enghouse had withdrawn as a candidate on March 11, three days after she filed. Rumors were making the rounds that she did so under pressure from top House Democrats, who favored another candidate, Janelle Bynum.



Adrienne Enghouse

House District 51 is currently represented by Shemia Fagan, a lawyer who beat a Republican incumbent in 2012 with considerable help from organized labor. This year, Fagan decided not to run again, but didn't announce until the deadline day. Enghouse — a registered nurse at Kaiser Sunnyside and executive vice president of Oregon Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals Local 5017,

had gone through the Oregon Labor Candidate School so that she'd be ready to run for office. She lives in Fagan's district, and when she realized on the last day to file that Fagan wasn't running, she put her name in the ring.

For the record, Enghouse

confirmed that she got calls from House Speaker Tina Kotek and Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, but says she dropped out for her own reasons, mainly the challenge as a working person of getting lots of time off — on short notice — for an unexpected campaign. She hopes to run again for public office in the future.

Kotek says she'd been working with Bynum, but didn't encourage Enghouse to drop out.

Bynum, on her campaign web site, calls herself “a small business owner,” but doesn't mention that her business is owning two McDonald's restaurants. She didn't return my calls. That's unfortunate, because I would have liked to ask her views on the recent minimum wage increase, and what starting wage her restaurants pay.



Photo from the Grimm episode "Lycanthropia"

Film unions hail expansion of Oregon tax credit

Unions representing Oregon workers in film and television are celebrating the expansion of the state's Film & Video Tax Credit. Last year, the Oregon Legislature renewed the \$10-million-a-year tax credit program through Jan. 1, 2024. This year, they expanded it — increasing the cap to \$12 million in 2016 and \$14 million in 2017 and thereafter. Both moves were uncontroversial, passing with just seven no votes in the Legislature.

The tax credit costs the Oregon treasury, but its supporters — including the Screen Actors Guild/American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG/AFTRA) and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Studio Mechanics Local 488 — say it incentivizes TV and film productions to choose Oregon. Oregon competes with as many as 30 other states for TV and film work with tax and other public subsidies.

The way Oregon's program works, the state conducts an annual online auction of tax credits. High-income individuals who pay Oregon personal income tax buy the credits at between 95 and 99 percent of their value and pocket the savings. The proceeds are then divvied out as cash rebates for up to 20 percent of the cost of production-related goods and services purchased from Oregon vendors — plus up to 10 percent of wages paid to production personnel. Only big productions, those that spend at least \$1 million in Oregon, are eligible for the subsidies.

IATSE Local 488 Business Manager Charlie Carlsen said tax subsidies are a big part of location choices today.

“It's become such a competitive industry for that,” Carlsen said. “It's corporate welfare. We don't like it, but if Oregon doesn't do it, we can't compete.”

But as subsidies go, Carlsen says, the Film & Video Tax Credit gets good value: It supports a clean industry with good-paying union jobs. Members of Local 488 earn about \$29 an hour, and with overtime can gross \$60,000 to \$70,000 a year. Carlsen himself works on the set of the TV show Grimm, handling plants. Besides Local 488, Grimm employs members of Teamsters Local 305, SAG/AFTRA, the Writers Guild, and Directors Guild of America.

Grimm has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Oregon Film & Video Tax Credit, receiving about \$19 million in the last five years — while spending roughly \$250 million in Oregon.

Other beneficiaries include the film Wild, the IFC show Portlandia, and the upcoming TNC show Librarians, which starts filming this month. And Beaverton-based animation studio Laika, maker of movies like the Box Trolls.

CORRECTION

A March 23 article about union members running for political office incorrectly listed the union affiliation of incumbent State Rep. Barbara Smith Warner (D-Dist. 45). Smith Warner is a former employee of the national AFL-CIO and the National Association of Letter Carriers; she is a former member of United Food and Commercial Workers, and Communications Workers of America.

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