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What's on your list today?®

LOCAL NEWS

A Fitting Choice

Diversity grounds race for state representative

BY CERVANTE POPE
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Oregon House District 43 is one of the most racially diverse legislative districts in the state, encompassing inner north and northeast Portland and the heart of the city's historic African-American community. Having Lew Frederick as its state representative, this heavily Democratic district has had a black leader fighting for issues important to minority communities since 2009. Now, with Frederick stepping down to run for an Oregon Senate seat, finding a fitting replacement for his House seat may seem difficult.

Focusing on the two main candidates running in the May 17 Democratic Primary, Tawna Sanchez and Roberta Phillip-Robbins, both minority females, stand up against one another pretty fairly. What it boils down to, is how each of them plans to go about alleviating pertinent issues, as well as their particular prioritized agendas.

Coming from both an educational background as a former teacher and a legal background after earning her law degree and doing policy work for children and families, Phillip-Robbins aims to focus her campaign and time in office around stabilizing disadvantaged families.

"The reason I'm seeking office is to really create the opportunities for families to thrive and not just make things meet," says Phillip-Robbins. "A good quality of life, to me, is not just something rich people should have. That's what our country has turned into



Roberta Phillip-Robbins



Tawna Sanchez

and I vehemently oppose that."

Other top priorities for the African-American candidate who serves as a youth and gang violence prevention specialist for Multnomah County, is bringing quality and affordable childcare to the state, supporting a livable wage, and making sure everyone, regardless of race or economic standing, has equal access to justice.

Yet this isn't to say that Sanchez, a Native American, doesn't come from and support some of these same ideas.

As a former foster parent, prison volunteer and director of family services at the Native American Youth and Family Center, Sanchez has experiences with family stabilization and justice issues. She lists some of her major political priorities as providing good schools for children, advocating for a higher minimum wage and workers' rights, and reforming the criminal justice system.

"It's not necessarily what we're trying to do, it's how we're trying to do it. I have a broad spectrum of experience and I think I look at things from a very community activist perspective," Sanchez says. "I've stood outside places protesting, that very direct on-the-ground activism. I'm definitely not afraid to do that."

One of the most crucial topics both candidates have to address right is opening up access to housing and preserving the cultural fabric of an inner city population that has lost thousands of residents to gentrification.

Creating affordable housing across the district is a given, but each candidate feels that the Cully Neighborhood which is situated across several blocks on both sides of Northeast Killingsworth Street between 42nd and 82nd Avenues could use the most attention for multiple reasons.

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Black United Fund Scholarships

The Black United Fund of Oregon's annual Scholarships Awards Luncheon will be hosted at Sentinel Hotel on Wednesday, May 25, from 11:30am to 1pm. Many deserving Portland and southwest Washington area students will be awarded scholarships.

The Black United Fund builds on a legacy of philanthropy and

education support services that positively impact students and academic institutions throughout the state of Oregon. Supporting unlimited futures for young people in the community with education attainment at the core is the goal of the community effort. This year the Black United Fund of Oregon welcomes home Renee Watson, an accomplished author,

Oregon native and Jefferson High School alumna who will deliver the keynote address.

The awards luncheon is open to the public, a great opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate the bright futures of our amazing students. Tickets and tables can be purchased at bufor.org. All proceeds will go to the Mentor4 Success program.