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Loretta Smith vows to make progress for underrepresented groups in her campaign for Portland City Council, wanting to direct more resources to aid homelessness and housing, and calling for the city to do a better job of increasing economic opportunities for people of color.



Jo Ann Hardesty, a longtime activist and former State Representative is running for the Portland City Council on four issues: Increasing citizens' access to local government proceedings, housing and homelessness, green jobs, and police accountability.

## Historic Midterm Women, people of color surface as top candidates

BY DANNY PETERSON  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

As citizens cast their votes in the next two weeks on official ballots that have already hit mailboxes for the May 15 Primary election, they will consider a diversity of candidates for what is shaping up to be a historic contest of city and county positions, particularly for women and people of color.

Following a trend nationwide, more females and other politically underrepresented groups are running for prominent political seats in local, state, and national elections this year.

All of the candidates in the Multnomah County Commission, District Two race are people of color and some of the top candidates that are running for Portland City Council are women of color, a position of power not ever held by that demographic in the city's 167 year history.

Hot topic issues like police and justice

reform, systemic inequity against people of color, a desire for improved mental health services, affordable housing, and humane approaches to homelessness appear as the main drivers of interest for those seeking office this year.

Jo Ann Hardesty, who is running for Dan Saltzman's seat on Portland City Council, said she became resolved to run when she attempted to testify on a police union contract negotiation in October 2016. Under then Mayor Charlie Hales, she could not enter City Hall due to it being barricaded by riot police. Hardesty's lawyer told her the barricades could have been dissolved if somebody on city council opposed it.

"That was the day I knew we had the wrong people on Portland City Council," Hardesty told the Portland Observer.

Last year, Hardesty had a meeting with Saltzman, and let him know she would be starting a campaign for his seat. The incumbent announced he would not be run-

ning for a sixth term soon after and will step down when his term ends in January.

Hardesty, the former President of NAACP Portland chapter has been a longtime local activist and former member of the Oregon House of Representatives. She said she's running for City Council on four issues: Increasing citizens' access to local government proceedings, housing and homelessness, green jobs, and police accountability.

Another top candidate for that same seat is Multnomah County Commissioner Loretta Smith, who boasts eight years of experience as the county's second ever African American commissioner. She also has over 20 years of experience as an assistant under U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore.

Smith vows to continue priorities to make progress for underrepresented groups in Portland, the motivation she said inspired her campaign. She wants to direct more resources to aid homelessness and

housing, and calls for the city to do a better job of increasing economic opportunities for people of color.

"I've spent a lot of time protecting our seniors and supporting our youth. And also making sure that we direct funding to homelessness and housing," Smith told the Portland Observer.

Although Smith's campaign was fined twice by the Oregon's Secretary of State's office for violating election laws, once for asking county staff to work at a political event and another time for not updating financial records, she and others have questioned whether the scrutiny was a distraction from more important issues.

A mayoral candidate from two years ago, for example, Jules Bailey, a white man, announced his candidacy while still serving as a county commissioner, just as Smith had, but received little scrutiny at

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