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5038 Kotek for House 44

Voters in North Portland's House District 44 have a choice between two fresh faces to replace Rep. Gary Hansen, the Democrat who vacated the seat for his unsuccessful run for Multnomah County commissioner last spring.

The two are Democrat Tina Kotek, 40, policy director for the nonprofit Children First for Oregon, and Republican Jay Kushner, 59, a civil engineer who specializes in seismic upgrading.

Both are bright, appealing candidates with a lot of ideas, but Kotek has a clear edge because of her deep knowledge of issues involving family financial stability and children's health. She is co-chairwoman of the state's Medicaid Advisory Committee as well as the One Voice for Child Care

Coalition, a broad-based group advocating to strengthen early childhood care and education in Oregon.

Before joining Children First she was the Oregon Food Bank's public policy advocate, a role that bolstered her credentials as someone who could offer the Legislature a great depth of policy expertise.

Election 2006

Endorsements

Kushner, a self-described "liberal Republican in the Oregon tradition of McCall and Hatfield," has an interesting panoply of ideas, such as "a 100 percent organic Oregon in 20 years," consolidation of the state's universities and "a laptop on every student's lap." His relative lack of experience actually serving the public, however, makes Kotek the logical choice in this heavily Democratic district.