

## **Keizer lawmaker becomes the first Republican to enter secretary of state race**

- By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE and SAM STITES Oregon Capital Bureau  
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Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, announced Thursday, Feb. 6, 2020, that she is running for secretary of state. Jaime Valdez/Portland Tribune

SALEM — Sen. Kim Thatcher, R-Keizer, announced during a massive Timber Unity rally at the Capitol Thursday that she is running for secretary of state.

Thatcher, who served in the House, has been in the Senate since 2015. She is the first Republican to announce a run for the office.

Secretary of State Bev Clarno, the Republican incumbent, isn't running for the office. She was appointed by Gov. Kate Brown to replace Dennis Richardson, who died last year. Richardson was the first Republican to win a statewide office since 2002.

“I want to focus on what Dennis Richardson focused on when he became secretary of state,” Thatcher said. “He did a lot to make sure we have fair elections, make sure we have access for everyone to the ballot initiative and referendum process, and to not use the Corporations Division to punish businesses, but help them succeed. Those are going to be my focus.”

Thatcher's campaign website promises "Accountability. Transparency. Integrity." The secretary of state oversees state elections, audits government programs and registers businesses.

Oregon has no lieutenant governor, so its secretary of state is second in line to the governor.

In 2014, allegations surfaced against Thatcher's family business, KT Contracting and Highway Specialties LLC, of contract fraud while subcontracting a state highway job in Eugene in 2005. The Oregon Department of Justice investigated for alleged criminal racketeering, but closed the case in 2012 without bringing charges. KT Contracting Inc. was fined \$60,000 in 2010 after a judge ruled records were intentionally destroyed, according to The Oregonian.

"Absolutely, I learned from that experience," Thatcher said. "I've worked in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, and it's unacceptable to me that Oregon is one of the hardest places to work and be a business owner. I'd like to use the Corporations Division, especially the small-business ombudsman we opened a few years ago to help (businesses) with technical assistance and to get over the hurdles of red tape and all that."

The filing deadline is March 10 ahead of the May 19 primary.

Four Democrats are vying for their party's nomination for secretary of state: former congressional candidate Jamie McLeod-Skinner of Terrebonne, Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, former House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson of Portland and Cameron Smith, who most recently was the head of the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services.

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