

TINA KOTEK

b. September 30, 1966

GOVERNOR OF OREGON

“When you’re coming out, you have to build a resilience of dealing with people who treat you differently for who you are, and that has made me a stronger person.”

She is the first openly lesbian governor of Oregon.

Christine “Tina” Kotek is the first openly lesbian governor of Oregon and one of the first two lesbian governors elected in the United States. She was the first openly lesbian speaker of a State House and the longest-serving House speaker in Oregon’s history.

Kotek was born in York, Pennsylvania, to first-generation American parents of Czech and Slovene ancestry. After graduating from Dallastown Area High School, Kotek attended Georgetown University but did not complete her studies. She moved to Oregon in 1987 and earned a bachelor’s degree in 1990 in religious studies from the University of Oregon. She earned her master’s degree in international studies and comparative religion from the University of Washington.

Kotek’s community service began long before she ran for public office. She served as an advocate for Oregon Food Bank and a policymaker for Children First for Oregon and continues to volunteer at her church’s food pantry.

Religion has always played an important role in Kotek’s life. She came out as a lesbian during her religious studies, which forced her to reconcile two key facets of herself. Though much anti-LGBTQ rhetoric originates from religious institutions, Kotek uses her faith to find strength in the face of opposition.

Kotek is vocal about her lesbian identity. She met her wife, Aimee Wilson, in 2005. They married in 2017, two years after same-sex marriage was legalized nationwide. Though they keep the details of their personal lives private, they are very open about their relationship and often attend political events together.

Kotek’s first foray into politics was marked by a loss in the 2004 Democratic primary, when she ran for a seat in the Oregon House. Victory came two years later, when she won a House seat with more than 80% of the vote. She was reelected every two years, and in 2013 she was nominated for Speaker of the House—a position never held by an out lesbian. She maintained the post until 2022, when she stepped down to run for governor.

In 2023 Kotek was elected the 39th governor of Oregon, making her the state’s first openly lesbian governor and one of two lesbian governors in U.S. history. She has devoted her life to bettering the lives of her adoptive home state’s citizens. Among other policies, her progressive Democratic agenda includes raising the minimum wage, increasing health care access, and keeping abortion legal.

Kotek lives in North Portland with her wife and their two dogs.



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