



## **TriCity Association (Kennewick, WA) Hosts Candidate Training – And Then Elects a REALTOR® Champion to Public Office – February 2014**

"We can lobby 'til we're blue in the face, but without the right people in office, we won't be getting anywhere." That's the insightful assertion that led Lola Franklin, CEO of the 700-member TriCity Association of REALTORS®, to seek a way to help REALTOR®-friendly candidates get elected in eastern Washington state.

Franklin, who had been involved with another REALTOR® association some 25 years ago, but had only recently returned to the industry, remembered an innovative program run by the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® in the '80s called 'See How They Run.' "It was cutting-edge back then," remarks Franklin, "and it's still not at all common now, to have this high level of expertise provided, free of charge, to citizens who are simply contemplating a run for public office. NAR is really at the forefront of encouraging grassroots participation in the political process."

She asked Nathan Gorton, Government Affairs Director for Washington state, what had happened to the program, and he suggested that the TriCity Association apply to host NAR's new Candidate Training Academy, and open it up to the eastern part of the state.

"Nathan was the real driver," says Franklin. "He said, 'I hear you: you want more political influence. Let's make it happen.' And he did." Gorton worked on bringing the Candidate Training Academy to the TriCity Association offices in Kennewick, Washington on June 10, 2013, and Franklin got on the phone and started seeking out and recruiting participants. She identified REALTORS® she wanted to see involved, and called on elected officials, to see who they were grooming for future candidacy; she also actively marketed the program to members. "We invited Republicans and Democrats alike," she notes. "It's about REALTOR® issues, not party affiliation. Once they're in office, elected officials will be hearing from all sorts of constituents. But they'll remember the ones who helped get them there."

About 25 participants, including a handful of members, took advantage of the program, which was presented by Gorton and run by a full-service political consulting firm contracted by NAR. Together, they spent an intensive and exciting day learning the basics of engaging in a political campaign, from assessing whether they had the basic traits necessary to run for office; to developing a 30-second reason-for-running statement; to fundraising and online campaign planning; to getting out the vote.

One of the participants was Don Barnes, a commercial REALTOR® who had been appointed to an interim position as a Port Commissioner, a powerful political role in this region along the mighty Columbia River, where economic development is a major issue. He had never actually run for office, nor was he involved in RPAC, when Franklin convinced him to attend the Candidate Training Academy. "I said to him, 'You're one of us, and we want to help you get elected.' He came, and was blown away by the level of the training," says Franklin. The TriCity Association backed his campaign with significant RPAC and Independent Expenditure support from both the local association and Washington Realtors, and Barnes was able to beat three opponents in the primary,



and went on to win the general election. Is he involved in RPAC now? "He's a major investor!" laughs Franklin.

"We're very proud of what we've done so far, and hope to have the chance to do it again," she continues. "We want be the ones planting the seeds." Beyond the primary goal of getting sympathetic candidates in to office, she points out that just by offering the candidate training, the REALTORS® are now recognized as being serious political players in the region, with knowledge, information, and resources -- and thanks to its grass-roots political efforts, more and more friends in high places.

To learn more about how the TriCity Association of REALTORS® is getting in on the ground floor of local politics, contact Chief Executive Officer Lola Franklin, CAE, at 509.783.2184 or lolafranklin@tricityaor.com.

*It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your Port of Kennewick Commissioner over the past year.*

In this, my first year with the Port, we faced great challenges and worked through some very difficult decisions. I am proud of what we have accomplished and confident in the course that we have set for the future of our district.

Since my appointment in May 2012, I have worked diligently to achieve a thorough understanding of the broad district concerns so that I can provide a fair and independent voice on the Commission. My decisions have been guided by the Port's chief responsibility to improve the economic health of our region by seeking development opportunities that provide value to our entire community.

My fellow commissioners selected me because my career in commercial real estate development has given me strengths in project management and financial analysis needed to tackle the challenges facing the Port today. Fiscal responsibility is key in my decision-making process. I come to the Port from a career in property, land and financial transactions and can assure you I wield a very sharp pencil in evaluating the Port's investment of your tax dollars.

We are blessed to live in a beautiful region, rich in resources and ripe with economic opportunity. I hope that you WILL SUPPORT ME as your Port Commissioner so that I may continue to work for you, listen to your concerns and make the most of the opportunities that lie ahead.

*DN Barnes*

**DON BARNES for Kennewick Port Commission**

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**YES!**  
I want to endorse DON!

The TriCity Association's Candidate Training Academy helped inspire commercial REALTOR® Don Barnes to run for Kennewick Port Commissioner -- and then the association helped him win!