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Viewpoint: For third year, Georgia Public Service Commissioner Tim Echols ready for Dragon Con

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In a political year like this one, everyone needs a little escape. For the third year in a row, my youngest daughter has talked me into signing up for Dragon Con. This annual Atlanta Labor Day Weekend festival prides itself on being the largest multi-media, popular culture convention in the world focusing on science fiction, fantasy, gaming, comics, literature, art, music, and film. Now they do professional gaming – live streamed over Twitch to the convention’s game-specific programming.

Last year, we helped with the Sunday Chapel for those who wanted to add a little faith to their fantasy. My daughter dressed as “Rey” from Star Wars, and believe it not, she talked me into wearing a Hobbit Cloak –but I insisted on wearing shoes. It was a fun weekend together and now enshrined as a family tradition.

I must say, that I have never, ever seen that many people, let alone creatures, crammed into hotel lobbies, convention space, sidewalks, and the Apparel Mart. Estimates are 75,000, and every fourth person had a costume and some kind of faux weapon.

Lines formed outside for popular ballroom sessions and literally wrapped around the buildings. It was the most orderly you will ever see super-heroes I am sure. From Iron Man to Harry Potter characters to Disney Princesses, they were all there. And these costumes were done right.

But the costumes are not actually part of the convention content. On any given day, there are over 50 seminars going on simultaneously throughout four hotels and the Mart – with every meeting room being used. Seminars, you say? About what?

Being a Lord of the Rings fan, I went to one session called “Touring New Zealand as Middle Earth.” My daughter loves the Eragon series so we went to hear the author of the series do a reading from his books. Earlier in the day, we met the Gotham cast and got a sneak preview about the next season. As a huge Star Trek fan, there was “The Economics of Star Trek” session followed by “Klingon Karaoke.” I am not joking. The people at Dragon Con are fans, and they can’t learn enough about their fantasy and sci-fi genre.

New for this year is the Jim Henson’s Creature Shop Challenge Live! This unique panel event will reunite the series’ original judges Brian Henson (Labyrinth, Farscape) and Kirk Thatcher (Dinosaurs, Muppets Tonight). Participants will be required to meet the guidelines of a creative brief. Contestants will have their



TIM ECHOLS

Georgia Public Service Commissioner Tim Echols at Dragon Con.

creations pre-judged on Friday, August 31 at 2:30pm at the Atlanta Marriott Marquis. At 4:00pm, Jim Henson's Creature Shop Challenge Live will begin in the Marriott's Atrium Ballroom.

As you can see, whether you like Muppets or Mr. Spock or Marvel characters, there is something for every fan. As for me and my daughter, we are both a little geeky, and you almost have to be to fully enjoy all that Dragon Con has to offer. Who knows, maybe they'll let me do a session on the sci-fi energy of the future? Certainly, there will still be energy commissioners in the future. In my dreams, you say.