

#1 Why are you running for office?

I am running for office because I am personally invested in the future of our county. I live in Pott. County, my kids go to school in Pott. County, and we attend church in Pott. Co. I am significantly invested in the safety, security, and future of our County. I have been a lawyer for 17 years, and my experience is diverse across multiple types of law. My goal is to be a voice for victims, proactive in fighting crime, and to bring trust and esteem to the criminal justice system.

#2 What do you consider the biggest challenge of the position you are running for? What areas of county government need improvement and why?

The current County Attorney has been in office for over 20 years; it will be a transition for everyone in the office to adjust to a new leader. The transition will require listening, learning, understanding, and effectively communicating within the office and with community partners to ensure we have the same mission and vision for Pottawatomie County. But with change comes growth. Growth instills confidence, security, and trust. I want the CA office to be one of the best places to work in Pott County.

#3 How long have you been a part of the Pottawatomie County Community? To what extent have you been a part of local government in the county?

My wife and I moved our family to Pottawatomie County in August 2023. Since then, I have established my law practice in Pott. County and the surrounding areas. I currently take court appointed and private cases in Pottawatomie County. I have been involved in county and municipal government matters as part of my practice for the last 16 years. To date, I maintain contracts with county government and municipal government in a variety of legal matters. I bring that experience with me to Pottawatomie County.

#4 Regarding your prospective position, what do you consider your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?

The type of work I have been involved with over the last 16 years spans every area of law that the county attorney's office is involved in either directly or indirectly. Others would describe me as level-headed, objective, wise, and an advocate for what I believe is right. My faith, worldview, and core values form the foundation that I will use to bring justice, fairness, and accountability to prosecuting cases.

I look forward to the challenges that come with any new position, both personally and professionally. The transition from being a defense attorney to the role of prosecutor will bring opportunity for growth but also bring fresh perspective. This is the next step in my career and I am confident I will serve the people well.

# 5 It's no secret that Pottawatomie County has broad and diverse demographics and culture. Please describe how you intend to strike a balance and serve everyone in the county.

Pottawatomie County's greatest strength is its diversity. I intend to treat all people fairly and prosecute crimes firmly. I will have an open-door policy for community members in bringing justice to victims, regardless of the severity of the crime. We need a unified voice and clear vision to achieve and maintain the safest Pottawatomie County possible for current and future generations. My diverse background of experience fits the needs of the diverse population of Pott County.

#6 What are your top priorities if you are elected?

I will bring conservative values to the office and focus on prosecuting those who prey upon the vulnerable and unprotected- i.e. victims of violent crimes, sex crimes, and child crimes. I will work to address mental health issues in criminal behavior. I will also work with veterans to ensure they are provided critical resources for their well-being and not turning to criminal behavior due to a failed system. I will focus on looking toward the future of Pottawatomie County so that our children and grandchildren can live in a safe and peaceful community. These priorities are most effectively accomplished through collaboration with our local law enforcement offices and community providers. I am excited to collaborate with the people who have boots on the ground. I will support their efforts at making this County the best in Kansas.

#7 How would you describe your management style?

My management style is a combination of visionary, collaborative, and coach. I have trained administrative staff, mediators, and lawyers over the past 16 years. I'm honored to have served as the President of several Kansas non-profit agencies. Every single person in the office has an equal voice, regardless of their job title or credentials. The county attorney's office is a team of professionals and will work best if they are united in principle, focus, and vision. This is a team effort as prosecuting crime requires all hands-on deck. As a small business owner, I must be educated in all areas of business to be successful. Even though I am a big thinker, I will rely heavily on those who know the details- this will make our office one of the best places to work. I desire to leave the office and the county in a better position than what I inherited from the current administration.

#8 How can we hire the best? How do we attract great candidates?

Hiring the best candidates comes from developing relationships and word of mouth. We must value our personnel and create a positive work environment that is focused on achievement, empowerment, value, and professionalism. Performance must be recognized, respected, and rewarded. Most importantly, work and life must have a balance.

#9 People often wind up in the criminal legal system because they are struggling with substance use disorders and mental health issues. Is it appropriate for prosecutors, police, and the courts to play a role in helping people with substance use disorders and mental health issues access care?

It is appropriate and necessary. If you have a life raft, wouldn't you throw it to the person who is drowning? One of the goals of the criminal justice system is to deter future criminal behavior. Substance use and untreated mental health are significant causes of criminal activity. If we can

help someone break an addiction or effectively manage their mental health diagnoses, it's a win for them, their family, their children, and the community. We can break generational curses by lending a hand to those who are struggling. Statistically, mental health issues begin with trauma, family behavior, and unfortunate circumstances. My goal is to give hope to the hopeless and partner with law enforcement to let people know we care. Change happens when we pair accountability with continued resources.

#10 Low-income people entering the legal system face barriers to getting out due to limited financial circumstances. Do you feel that high fines, fees, and financial assessments in the criminal and traffic court system have contributed to the "criminalization of poverty" where poor people face harsher outcomes for the same conduct as others due to their poverty? Why or why not?

It is not a crime to be impoverished. Our office will treat all criminal defendants fairly and firmly. However, we will demand accountability regardless of their financial standing. Fines and fees are monetary punishments and civil obligations that are a consequence of a criminal conviction. The court system's job is to follow the law in assessing minimum and maximum fees. My experience in the criminal justice system has proved that people will find the money if it's important to them to settle their debts. It is crucial for all citizens to pay their respected fines/fees in hopes that the behavior will not be repeated.

#11 What is the number one crime-related issue that needs a plan of action and how will you address it?

Trafficking is the number one crime related issue. Trafficking is the world's fastest growing and second most profitable criminal enterprise at \$150 billion per year. We cannot deny it isn't happening right here in our county. It affects the most vulnerable populations -women and children. Trafficking breeds illegal and dangerous drugs, such as meth, cocaine, and fentanyl. I have seen local and state agencies lack adequate training and education to prevent trafficking. I will work with state and local enforcement, community partners, government, private agencies, and schools to ensure we are educated and equipped. It has become a national concern that needs more attention than ever.

Respectfully yours,

/s/ John Paul D. Washburn  
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Attorney