

## General Questions/ Prompts for All Candidates:

### Why are you running for office?

I am running for County Attorney because criminal prosecution is the work I love, and I feel I have a calling for that public service. I am a K-State and then KU Law graduate, I have been an attorney for over 40 years. I was elected to 4 consecutive terms as Geary County Attorney until I left to become the State Securities Commissioner where I personally prosecuted securities fraud cases. I also was the lead prosecutor in court division 11 in the Shawnee County District Attorney's Office in Topeka for 3 years, then served as an assistant in Geary County for three years. I was voted the outstanding prosecutor by the Kansas County and District Attorneys Association for my efforts in a murder case where the defendant's dogs killed an 11-year-old boy as he waited for a school bus. It was the first such case in the U.S. and is now covered in law school teaching materials. While I was the County Attorney, the office filed over 24,000 criminal cases in 14 years and helped send to prison, not counting county jail, approximately 900+ people during that time. This was in a County with a population of 30-40 thousand. I have personally successfully handled many homicide and other serious felony cases. I am a member of the bar of Kansas, Federal Court, and the United States Supreme Court. I have appeared many times in the Kansas Supreme Court and Court of Appeals and am very familiar with the appeal process. I have also handled Traffic and child in need of care cases as a prosecutor and in my current private practice. I drafted the 1-year limitation on prisoner habeas actions which limits many frivolous appeals by inmates. I also drafted the "use immunity" statutes which enable prosecutors to force a co-defendant to testify at a jury trial of another defendant. I have also taught trial skills to other attorneys and law students in State, national, and international trial advocacy programs. My wife and I live on ten acres in rural Geary County, near the Riley County line. I grew up in east Manhattan, and have lived in the Manhattan area my entire life. I have shopped regularly in Pottawatomie County for over 50 years. Importantly, all people who face charges in the courts are human beings, and they should always be treated with respect, to their rights and humanity. A prosecutor must have the strength to be firm, the desire to be fair, and the experience to do the job on day one.

### What do you consider the biggest challenge of the position you are running for?

The biggest challenge for a prosecutor is what I call "standing in the gap". There are many moving parts to the criminal justice system. A prosecutor has a higher duty to seek justice above and beyond simply filing and "winning" cases. There are circumstances where events, statutes, and attitudes come together to potentially result in what most citizens would view as an unjust result. Example, the sale of just under a pound of Marijuana should not have the same penalty as a killing in the heat of passion. Oftentimes, juvenile convictions result in later first-time adult offenders receiving presumptive prison and harsh sentences. This is sometimes a result of prosecutors seeking multiple convictions out of single events to stack up a juvenile's history. Also, not every case of "playing doctor" among young juveniles should be treated as a juvenile offender matter, requiring a conviction and registration as a sex offender. Yet this is often sought by

prosecutors, ruining children's lives. There are other times when experience must be called upon to prosecute difficult or novel cases to the full extent of the law. (See 1st question). The most challenging criminal case I handled involved a homicide case concerning church members from Salina, and a prophecy that God should intervene to keep a man from seeing his child. There was no murder weapon found, no confessions, and no independent witnesses. There was a seven-week jury trial and the defendants (brother and sister) were both convicted. The case is covered on the 500<sup>th</sup> episode of the "Snapped" television program and is available on the internet.

What areas of county government need improvement and why?

I think communication can always be improved upon. I would promote efforts with law enforcement in the County to have regular meetings to discuss matters pertinent to all. Rapport with law enforcement is critical to the effectiveness of prosecution and the ultimate protection of citizens. If elected, I will leave my private law firm and be dedicated 100% to the people of Pottawatomie County, and available 24-7. I would endeavor to have regular meetings and training sessions with law enforcement concerning search and seizure law, substantive criminal and procedural law, and whatever topics they would request. Law enforcement agencies are separate entities from the prosecutor, and they need to be respected and listened to.

How long have you been a part of the Pottawatomie County community?

I grew up in East Manhattan, Kansas. I fished Rocky Ford, Pott. State Lake #2, and the Blue River since childhood. I have paid Pott. County sales tax my whole life, when shopping in the County, mostly in East Manhattan and sometimes Wamego. I do not live in Pottawatomie County, but in rural Geary County near the interstate, where I have lived for over 30 years. A county attorney is not required to live in the County. I am also a musician, and perform weekly at The Little Grill on Dyer Road in Pott Co. I am not a recent transplant.

To what extent have you been a part of local government in the county?

This is my first office sought in Pottawatomie County.

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

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Weaknesses?

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Weaknesses are often the flip side of our strengths. It is easy for someone with my experience to get "set in our ways" particularly when those ways have served well. It is impossible to leave the job at work. This adds stress to the position.

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.

I served in Geary County for over 14 years as the elected County Attorney before I lost a close race for attorney general and became the Kansas Securities Commissioner. Junction City is probably one of the most racially and culturally diverse communities in Kansas with many ethnic communities, often a result of Ft Riley and the military presence all over the world. I had a reputation as a firm but fair prosecutor. I am still known as "Mr. Chris" by many members of the community. The best way to strike a balance is to have an understanding of culture, but believe that prosecution decisions cannot in any way be affected by one's race or background. My opponent has talked about praying with all victims before court. I prayed with victims on rare occasions when requested. I have faith of my own. However, I do not think prayer should be a policy. Is that a Catholic or a Protestant prayer? What about Muslims, Hindus, Agnostics or Atheists? All are entitled to the same treatment by the justice system. Having said that, if the prosecutor has no experience, much prayer may be required.

What are your top priorities if you are elected?

Stop Fentanyl and methamphetamine use and distribution.

How would you describe your management style?

Lead by example, don't ask anyone to do what I would not. Get in the trenches with them. I would be the lead prosecutor on major cases,

How can we hire the best?

Create a great work environment and culture.

How do we attract great candidates?

Same. Point out all the positives of Pott. County.

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?

Absolutely. I believe in drug treatment for users convicted of non-violent crimes. Addicts need to hit bottom before they change. Sometimes we convict and impose sentence for that to happen. Mental issues are relevant at the time of the crime (for specific intent crimes), at the time of trial (if not competent to stand trial) and at sentencing (if treatment is needed in lieu of or before incarceration) Unbelievably, currently there is such a waiting list at Larned State Security Hospital

that an “incompetent” inmate may wait over a year in jail before a bed is available for treatment . If required, I will file or join lawsuits to force change there.

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?

This is a legitimate concern. Where possible, and people are indigent or the working poor, I would consider other options for payment, such as community service, where allowed by law and that would not impact on the victims, whose rights should take priority. I also believe that people who cannot afford any bond should be considered for release on signature bonds if they are not a risk to the community.

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

Fentanyl is the major concern. I would work with the sheriff and other departments to expand and improve a task force concept for enforcement. I would also move to create a county wide education outreach for people in the community to combat “dirty 30s” or whatever deadly fad comes next.

Chris Biggs