

2026 Hamilton County General / Tennessee Primary Election Voter Guide

501(c)(3) - compliant
and nonpartisan

Democratic Primary & General Candidates

State Primary & County General

| August 6, 2026



CHURCH
Voter Guides

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8/6/2026

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Church Voter Guides does not endorse or oppose any candidates for public office or any political party.

The Voter Guide information contained in this document is provided for informational purposes only. It was obtained directly from candidates and other sources, and we have done our best to convey it to you accurately, but nothing herein has been "fact checked". Utilize this Voter Guide at your own discretion. We take no responsibility for the factual nature of the content, or for publishing errors, etc. To the best of our knowledge, this Voter Guide is 501(c)(3)-compliant and officially nonpartisan, and thereby it does not support or oppose any candidate.

2026 Hamilton County Democratic General / Tennessee Democratic Primary Election Voter Guide

Democratic Primary & General Candidates

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Introduction to the Voter Guide

Church Voter Guides is an independent 501(c)(3) faith-based nonprofit organization. We serve the public by providing objective research and education on matters specifically of interest to Christians, primarily through the production and distribution of 501(c)(3)-compliant, nonpartisan Voter Guides.

Church Voter Guides does not endorse or oppose any candidates for public office or any political party.

Church Voter Guides, a Tennessee nonprofit, initially started in Colorado Springs in April of 2021. This new Voter Guide for the 2026 Democratic General / Primary is being distributed electronically-only through our website via downloadable and printable PDF files, as well as mobile-friendly interactive webpages. We have produced one Voter Guide for each seat that is: (1) conducting a contested election this year, and (2) for which at least one candidate in that election answered our Questionnaire. Our Voter Guides are being promoted through a wide-ranging network of area churches, faith-based non-profit organizations, mainstream and social media, and other means.

The purpose of our Voter Guides is to educate and inform voters of each candidate's positions on a variety of policy issues that they are likely to address if elected, as well as information on Ballot Measures. As a Voter Guide designed to be distributed through Churches, we ask the candidates questions on topics that are of utmost interest to the Christian voter.

How to Get the Most Benefit from this Voter Guide

The core information in this Voter Guide comes directly from the candidates themselves. We asked them questions, they answered (with a 120 word limit), and we have published their responses here verbatim. In order to understand and utilize this information to the fullest, so that you may vote in the most informed way, we suggest the following:

1. Pray and ask the Almighty for discernment. The Kingdom of God is all about truth, while politics is a system fraught with compromise. Make sure you consider the candidates' answers with a Heavenly mindset.
2. Ask yourself, "Did the candidate actually answer the question, or rather side-step it, or give a fluff, wishy-washy, and/or 'political' type answer that leaves you not really knowing where he/she truly stands on the issue?"
3. Learn more about the candidates running for Democratic Primary & General Candidates, including their positions on issues we did not cover in our questionnaire, by visiting their official campaign websites (if they have one.) The website URL for each candidate is listed in the Voter Guide.
4. Educate yourself more about the Christian/Biblical perspective regarding many of the subjects covered in our Voter Guide by reading topical articles on our website: www.VoteChattanooga.org
5. Use search engines to find additional information about each candidate, including written articles and videos, other voter guides, and even voting records for those who have served in public office before. You may even want to watch online recordings of the local Democratic Primary & General Candidates meetings to see how incumbents conduct themselves and vote.
6. Reach out to the candidates themselves through the provided email addresses and other means, in order to ask them questions of personal importance to you. Please make sure to show great respect toward each candidate and his/her time, especially to those with whom you disagree. Running for office is hard, stressful, time consuming work, and these are your fellow citizens who have lives, families, jobs...and feelings (just like you!)

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What makes a Voter Guide 501(c)(3)-compliant and Nonpartisan?

Federal tax law permits nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations to develop and distribute materials about political candidates' positions on issues, in order to educate voters impartially and on a nonpartisan basis; meaning that it is free from party affiliation, bias, or designation. The IRS states that 501(c)(3) organizations may conduct any range of activities to promote voter participation and educate voters so long as it is nonpartisan. But, 501(c)(3) organizations are explicitly prohibited from supporting or opposing candidates for public office or political parties.

Some of the activities 501(c)(3) nonprofits *MAY* perform: Conduct or promote voter registration; educate voters on the voting process; distribute nonpartisan sample ballots, candidate questionnaires, and **voter guides**; organize get-out-the-vote activities; encourage and help people to vote; educate the candidates on issues important to their organization; and continue to do issue advocacy during an election.

So, first and foremost: **Church Voter Guides** does **NOT** endorse or oppose any candidates for public office or any political party.

Second, all of our staff and volunteers are required to act in a nonpartisan manner when working for or representing the organization and the creation of the Voter Guide.

Third, we do not edit, revise, or editorialize candidate responses to our Questionnaire. We do not even correct typos. **Candidate answers are published verbatim**, ensuring that their responses accurately represent their positions and perspectives on these issues. We then simply share this information through the Voter Guide, and you decide whom you believe to be the best candidate.

To be fair and impartial, we reached out by email, text, and phone when determined necessary, to all registered candidates running for Democratic Primary & General Candidates throughout Hamilton County / Tennessee for their 2026 elections, inviting them to answer our questionnaire. Candidate information is presented in alphabetical order by **last name**. If a Candidate did not respond at all, or did not choose to participate, or did not choose to respond to certain answers in the questionnaire, then it is noted where applicable. If there were not enough candidates running, then we did not produce a Voter Guide for that seat.

Join Our Growing Grassroots Coalition of Citizens, Churches/Nonprofit Organizations, and Media Partners Committed to Producing and Promoting the Voter Guides throughout Our Region

Let's get the word out!

It's simple. Just share our website URL all around the Hamilton County / Tennessee region:

www.VoteChattanooga.org

Tell your friends and neighbors, post on social media, and ask your Pastors to promote it to your congregation (we'll even provide you /them with the announcement info and the PowerPoint promo slide.)

Please contact us for any reason, we'd love to collaborate with you: **Info@VoteChattanooga.org**

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The "Small Print": The information contained in this document is being provided for informational purposes only. It was obtained directly from candidates and other sources, and we have done our best to convey it to you accurately, but nothing herein has been "fact checked". Utilize this Voter Guide at your own discretion. We take no responsibility for the factual nature of the content, or for publishing errors, etc. To the best of our knowledge, this Voter Guide is 501(c)(3)-compliant and officially nonpartisan, and thereby it does not support or oppose any candidate.

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**2026 Hamilton County General / Tennessee
Primary Election Voter Guide**

**Democratic Primary & General
Candidates**

General

2026 Hamilton County General Election Voter Guide

Candidates for County Commission

Survey Questions for 2026 General County Commission Candidates

- 1) **Purpose:** What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?
- 2) **Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives:** What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?
- 3) **Budget:** What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?
- 4) **Constitutional Liberties:** As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?
- 5) **Protecting Life:** What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?
- 6) **Moral Values:** Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?
- 7) **Speed cameras:** How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?
- 8) **Zoning/Planning:** What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?
- 9) **Managing County Growth and Infrastructure:** What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?
- 10) **Planning for Unincorporated Areas:** Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

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County Commission Dist. 1 Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Mona Petro



Gene-o Shipley

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MONA PETRO

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 1
Campaign Website:	VotePetro.com
Email Address:	Votemonapetro@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Retired
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	Hamilton Co. 8 years

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

The role of the County Commission is to serve the people through responsible, transparent governance. This includes setting priorities for taxpayer dollars, supporting public safety, public schools, infrastructure, and strong communities.

It is equally important that the Commission operates as a unified body, grounded in clear values and a shared mission. Each decision should begin with a simple question: how does this serve the best interests of our residents?

Our priorities remain clear—protecting strong family values, preserving the beauty of our environment, and maintaining the character of our community. We are accountable first and foremost to the people we serve, not outside interests.

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2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

My focus is on responsible growth, strong infrastructure, and being a committed advocate for public education. A strong school system provides the foundation for young people to become capable, contributing members of our community.

Investing early—especially in underserved areas—creates opportunity, guidance, and long-term stability. When students have support and mentorship, they are more likely to pursue meaningful, productive paths.

I also see a strategic opportunity in leveraging our position as Gig City to attract employers with a strong WORK FROM HOME workforce. This allows graduates to remain in Hamilton County while accessing broader career opportunities. To support this growth, we must ensure affordable housing, transportation, and infrastructure are in place.

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

My top priorities are:

1. Infrastructure investment: Roads, water systems, and emergency services must be funded first, with growth tied to capacity so we avoid costly repairs and delays later.
2. Responsible budgeting: Careful stewardship of taxpayer dollars, focusing on long-term savings, reducing waste, and prioritizing essential services while maintaining strong reserves.
3. Strong schools: Supporting education as a long-term investment in our workforce and community, helping develop responsible, capable citizens prepared for the future.

Growth can be expensive, and that burden should never fall on existing residents. Developers must take responsibility for the true cost of new growth. Decisions should reflect long-term fiscal responsibility—not short-term gain.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

Protecting Constitutional liberties is essential to a just and inclusive community. I will support policies that uphold freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and religious expression, while also ensuring equal protection under the law for all residents. These rights must be applied consistently—not selectively—and the Constitution should always serve as our guiding framework.

Good governance requires transparency, accountability, and fairness so every voice can be heard. People should feel both protected and empowered to exercise their rights. My role is to help foster a community rooted in respect, dignity, and a shared commitment to upholding these freedoms for everyone.

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5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

Protecting the most vulnerable is both a moral responsibility and a reflection of our shared values. I believe every life has inherent worth and dignity. At the county level, that means strengthening families, supporting those in crisis, and ensuring the elderly, homeless, and vulnerable are treated with compassion and care.

We must also remain vigilant in addressing human trafficking through strong partnerships with law enforcement and community organizations. From a faith perspective, we are called to care for one another—especially those most in need. My focus will be on practical support, safety, and restoring hope so individuals can move toward stability and a better future.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Moral principles have long helped shape both our laws and our understanding of right and wrong. The values reflected in the Ten Commandments—honesty, respect for life, personal responsibility, and treating others with fairness—offer a meaningful moral foundation, including respect for all people.

In my experience attending churches across Hamilton County, I've seen these values truly lived out. When they are modeled by churches, families, teachers, and community leaders, they become far more impactful—especially for young people—than simply being displayed in writing.

Because people come from different backgrounds and beliefs, I believe it is more meaningful to live these values with integrity than to require their display.

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Public safety, especially in school zones, is essential—but it must be balanced with fairness, transparency, and constitutional protections. When we are in school zones and areas where children are present, the priority is simple—we slow down and protect our students.

Strict oversight should include clearly marked signage, routine accuracy testing and calibration of equipment, public reporting on how many citations are issued and how revenue is used, and a simple, fair process for residents to challenge tickets.

Any enforcement must fully respect due process. The goal should always be safety—not revenue—and policies should reflect that clearly.

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8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

Zoning and planning decisions should reflect why people choose to live here—the natural beauty, the sense of community, and the quality of life. We have a responsibility to be good stewards of our environment, protecting our land, water, and wildlife as we grow.

I believe planning committees should include knowledgeable representatives from each district who understand their communities and work alongside county commissioners—not developers—to ensure current residents are always the priority.

Responsible growth means thoughtful, transparent decisions that protect both our communities and the environment we are entrusted to care for.

9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

Hamilton County already has important tools—zoning regulations, planning reviews, and infrastructure assessments—but the key is using them proactively, not reactively. Growth should be tied to capacity, meaning development moves forward only when roads, emergency services, and utilities can support it.

I would support better coordination between planning and infrastructure timelines, along with evaluating traffic, emergency response times, and service availability before approving major developments. Growth should also include family-focused amenities, support for small businesses, and thoughtfully planned communities that consider quality of life.

Responsible, well-paced growth ensures our county remains a place where families and businesses can thrive together.

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10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

Creating a separate planning commission for unincorporated areas may sound helpful, but it also brings challenges—we are one Hamilton County, and our planning should reflect that unity.

My preference is to maintain a single countywide planning commission while expanding its structure to ensure strong local representation. Members should be assigned by district, with a responsibility to truly know their area—visiting communities, listening to residents, and understanding local needs.

This way, when a project is presented, the assigned member can speak with real insight and firsthand knowledge of the area, rather than relying solely on information provided by developers. That leads to more balanced, informed decisions that reflect the community.

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GENE-O SHIPLEY

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 1
Campaign Website:	Gene Shipley political page
Email Address:	Geneshipleypumbing@comcast.net
Occupation/Vocation:	Plumber
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	Hamilton County / Soddy Daisy Tn for 70 years

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

That we are to set a budget and pass or deny resolutions.

2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

As a county commissioner I have been focused on upgrading schools, working with all body of county government, upgrading roadways and help with youth sport programs.

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3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

Spending: Roads, Schools and WWTa expansion of sewers.

Saving: The budget is so tight there is little to no room for cuts.

Economic development: I would like to bring more jobs to Hamilton County/ City of Chattanooga where infrastructure is already in place.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

Follow The Constitution

5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

That would be up to the state and federal government.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Yes

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Speed cameras are there to help protect the children. Everyone has the right to challenge their innocence.

8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

I would like to continue to support the new zoning and planning commission that we are currently working on.

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9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

We need slow some of the over build down and give the country government a chance to catch up. We need to catch up on infrastructure and schools.

10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

Yes, because we are currently put in the same category as City of Chattanooga and the county doesn't have the infrastructure as City of Chattanooga.

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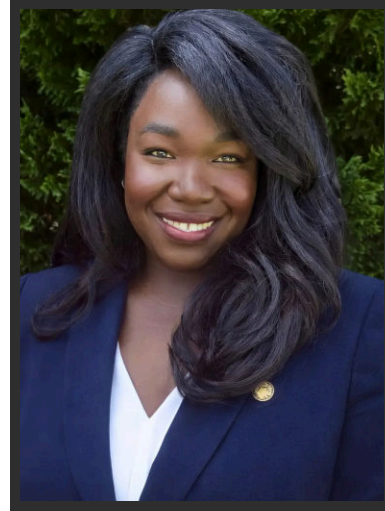


County Commission Dist. 2 Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Chip Baker



Amanda Sovago-Royal

Independent Survey by





CHIP BAKER

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 2
Campaign Website:	chipbakercommission.com
Email Address:	chipbaker58@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Management
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	34

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

As the legislative body of the County, our job is to work closely with the executive office to oversee the budget and operations of Hamilton County. With over 40 years in management, I bring a strong business acumen to the Commission, where others do not. Having run hospitals, events, and now teaching management, I bring a strong business perspective.

As a County Commissioner, not only do I oversee the business aspect of the County but I am also a problem solver. When my constituents have issues, my job is to get them resolved. This is a great strength of mine.

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2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

I have spent 40 years in management. With a Master's in Hospital Administration, I spent the first 20 years of my career in that field. My last position, in that field, was the Administrator of Children's Hospital at Erlanger. I changed careers in 1999 and ran the Riverbend Festival (and other events) for the next 20 years. For the past 7 years, I have taught management to our future community leaders.

These experiences have allowed me to use my management expertise to lead our County with over a \$1 billion budget. We have a myriad of issues and opportunities (e.g. safety, schools, infrastructure) that allow me to use these skill sets to proactively help Hamilton County

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

I have a strong relationship with the Chamber of Commerce. The greatest opportunity to assist them would be with Enterprise South, Broad Street and the Bend developments.

We have spending needs in infrastructure such as roads (\$150 million) and sewers (\$500 million). A better plan needs to be developed by our executive arm.

Savings can be achieved through better economies of scale. A current opportunity is how we coordinate between the hotel/motel tax dollars and how we leverage these with opportunities with the Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Board, Convention Center and all associated attractions. This will allow us to better market our community for business and visitors, allowing our hotels and attractions to flourish

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

Constitutional liberties are paramount to our way of life. We must maintain these liberties in all forms, including freedom of speech, appropriate assembly, and religious freedom. There can be no compromise. For instance, before each Commission meeting, we have a prayer, that anyone has the opportunity to do. I support Sheriff Garrett and what he is doing to keep our community safe. I was integral in the development of Hamilton County jail (eliminating for profit Core Civic) with both Sheriffs Hammond and Garrett.

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5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

I was the Administrator of Children's Hospital at Erlanger. My wife, Karlette, and I have 4 children. There is nothing more important than for us, as adults, to protect them. They look to us to take care of them and provide for them. The elderly, similarly, are due our respect and need us to do anything possible to honor their lives. They blazed the trail for us and are worthy of anything we can do to assist them.

I worked with Senator Corker on their emphasis on trafficking.

Lastly, I have a strong relationship with the City of Chattanooga and the Chattanooga Foundation on how we take care of the homeless population.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

I am a Christian and believe in the Ten Commandments. To me, it starts with honoring my father and mother who were the best role models I have ever had. I hope and pray that I have been even half of that to our children. I think Karlette and I did pretty well in that category, though!

Even though there might be government restrictions, in most cases, it is still possible to let the Ten Commandments prevail in everything we do.

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Speed cameras, if done right, can have a positive effect on speeding, particularly in school zones. I live on Signal Mountain and there is a speed gun on Shackleford Ridge Road. Now, this is not an official one but it does show how fast you are going. Does it make an impression on me? Absolutely.

Due process is paramount, with official speed cameras, so if this is not the case then corrections should be made to follow due process.

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8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

This is a big opportunity. Land rights should be respected but so should the rights of the community. Are sewers available? What about roads and schools? There needs to be a balance between smart development and overdevelopment. There needs to be a better dialogue between developers, realtors, public works (including roads and sewers), the school system, and the community. This does not happen but should be paramount in all development discussions

The County is funded primarily through property taxes so development needs to be done correctly.

9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

We have \$150 million in roads needs and \$500 million in sewer needs. There needs to be a better coordinated effort between builders, roads, sewers, schools, fire, EMS, police/sheriff to make sure that we have all the needed services to sustain the growth we need to remain a strong community.

I set up a meeting last year with the RPA, Chamber, Realtors, Homebuilders, Public Works, Schools Administration and others to address this. This cannot be solely driven by the Commission as all other entities need to want to be at the plate. I will not let this need be exhausted by those who do not see the need or care.

10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

About 80% of the Regional Planning Committees decisions are based on the City of Chattanooga needs. When looking at their Board composition, they are heavily represented by the development/sales/architect community. The Board composition should be more balanced.

With only 20% of their decisions based on unincorporated Hamilton County needs, the Board should be more representative of that market. A separate planning commission would help with that disparity.

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AMANDA SOVAGO-ROYAL

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 2
Campaign Website:	amandafordistrict2.com
Email Address:	info@amandafordistrict2.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Graphic Designer, Business Owner
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	34

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

Our County Commission exists to serve the people of Hamilton County by making responsible decisions about budgets, infrastructure, and policies that impact our daily lives. I see this role as a researcher, decision-maker and a communicator. Commissioners should listen to constituents first, ask field experts thoughtful questions, and continuously ensure residents understand what's happening and why. As a commissioner I will govern in a transparent, fiscally responsible, and grounded way, guided by the community's needs. At the end of the day, the role is simple: represent ALL residents fairly and make decisions that strengthen our county now and for the future.

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2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

I'm a lifelong Chattanooga native who chose to stay and raise my daughter here because I believe in this community. As a small business owner and single parent, I understand how to balance priorities, make tough decisions, and stretch resources wisely. That perspective shapes how I approach budgeting and leadership. Through my work with local nonprofits, I've also seen firsthand the challenges many residents face, and how often people feel overlooked or unheard. As a commissioner, I would focus on infrastructure, strong public schools, and clear communication so residents understand decisions that impact them. My goal is to support thoughtful growth while building trust between local government and the people it serves.

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

My top priorities are:

1. Investing in infrastructure so roads, traffic patterns, and emergency services keep pace with growth, while also reviewing past decisions to avoid repeating costly mistakes.
2. Supporting strong public education by ensuring schools have the resources they need, especially to address overcrowding.
3. Practicing responsible budgeting that respects taxpayer dollars while planning for long-term needs, including exploring thoughtful ways to increase county revenue without raising taxes.

Economic development should be intentional and sustainable. Growth matters, but it must be balanced with the quality of life for current residents. I believe in attracting opportunity while also protecting the communities people already call home.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

Protecting constitutional liberties is a core government responsibility. I come from a strong military family with service across multiple branches, and I participated in the Army JROTC program throughout high school, where I served as Company Commander. That experience, along with my involvement in SkillsUSA at Chattanooga State, instilled in me a deep respect for our Constitution and the freedoms it protects. These freedoms are foundational to who we are as a country. As a County Commissioner, I will support policies that uphold freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and religious liberty for all residents, ensuring government remains transparent, accountable, and consistent in protecting these rights equally.

Independent Survey by



5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

Protecting vulnerable populations requires both compassion and practical solutions. I believe deeply in supporting victims of trafficking, the homeless, seniors, and families in need. Regarding the lives of the unborn, I believe these are deeply personal medical decisions that a woman should make in consultation with her doctor & spouse, not the government. Simultaneously, we must increase local support for women who want to carry a pregnancy but feel unable to do so. We achieve this by strengthening access to healthcare, childcare, and community resources. At the end of the day, the role of a County Commissioner is to focus on making our community function better, not on political grandstanding about divisive national issues that distract from local needs.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

I respect the role that faith and personal values play in many people's lives, including my own as a Christian. The Founding Fathers intentionally designed our system of government to serve a diverse community with many different beliefs while protecting people from government overreach. As a County Commissioner, my responsibility is to uphold the Constitution and ensure laws are applied fairly and equally to all residents. I believe our policies should reflect faith principles like integrity, accountability, respect for others, and values widely shared across our community.

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Public safety is important, especially in school zones, but it must be balanced with fairness and transparency. I believe any use of automated speed cameras should include clear oversight, consistent enforcement, and accessible ways for residents to understand and challenge citations if needed. Public trust depends on transparency. If residents feel systems are unclear or unfair, that trust is lost. I would support reviewing current practices to ensure they prioritize safety while respecting due process.

Independent Survey by



8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

Transparency and accountability are critical for land use decisions. I would support clear disclosure requirements, strong conflict-of-interest policies, and open communication so residents understand how decisions are made. Growth should benefit the entire community, not just a select few. Ensuring that planning and zoning processes are fair, ethical, and transparent is essential to maintaining public trust and protecting the long-term interests of Hamilton County residents. I'm not anti-growth, I'm pro-SMART growth, as it is possible to have the best of both worlds.

9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

Hamilton County has tools like zoning, planning commissions, and infrastructure planning, but it must use them more intentionally. Growth should be paced so that roads, schools, and emergency services can keep up. Unincorporated areas and renters (including many along Mountain Creek Road in my district) are too often overlooked in budgeting and infrastructure decisions. I believe every resident deserves equal consideration, because we all contribute to the system. As a commissioner, I would prioritize better coordination between development and infrastructure, along with greater transparency so residents understand how decisions are made. Thoughtful, inclusive planning ensures growth benefits the entire community, not just select areas.

10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

I believe regional planning, with thoughtful reforms, is the most effective approach—not because it is politically easier, but because transportation, housing, and infrastructure function as interconnected regional systems. Rather than immediately splitting planning bodies, I would support creating a working group around the current regional planning board to evaluate what's working, what isn't, and whether unincorporated areas are being served equitably. If gaps exist, we should identify clear, actionable steps to address them. After a defined period, if residents still feel their needs are unmet, then creating a separate planning structure should be revisited, with a clear plan for how it would function independently and collaborate regionally. We need a measured approach, not a knee-jerk reaction that creates new challenges.

Independent Survey by

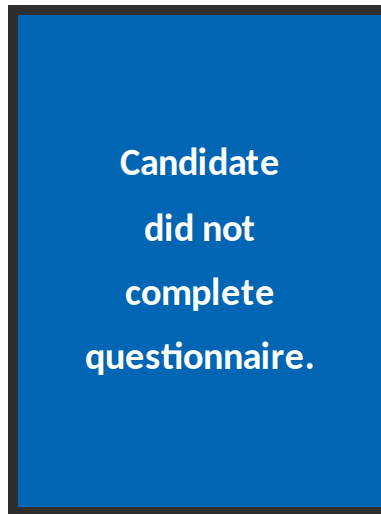


County Commission Dist. 6 Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



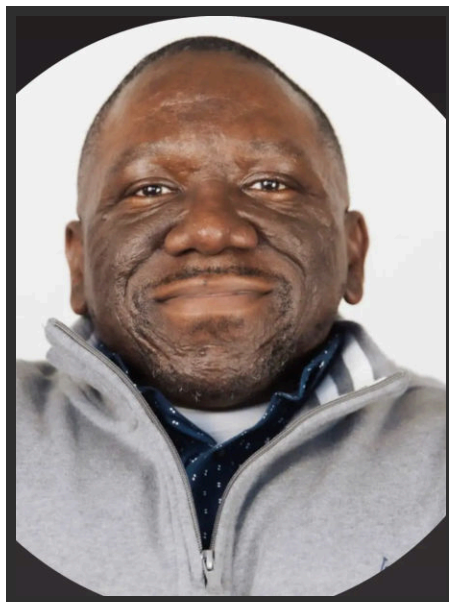
Justin Pinkerton



David Sharpe

Independent Survey by





JUSTIN PINKERTON

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 6
Campaign Website:	pinkertonfordistrict6.com
Email Address:	justin@pinkertonfordistrict6.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Director of Operations
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	Lifelong resident of Red Bank

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

Power in our system ultimately rests with the people, and the County Commission exists to serve them. That starts with listening first, then responding with sound judgment. As a community-first candidate, I see my role as a steward of taxpayer dollars while ensuring essential services are delivered effectively and decisions improve quality of life.

A Commissioner should also serve as a check within government by asking tough questions, demanding transparency, and holding systems accountable. At its best, the Commission listens to residents, communicates clearly, and leads with integrity. Every decision should reflect what's best for the community, not special interests.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

My focus is on accountability, operations, and service delivery. I have over two decades of management experience. Currently, I am operations manager in the hospitality industry. I have a strong sense of understanding complex systems, various processes, managing employees, and providing superior service. We have to make sure government works efficiently for the people it serves. As County Commissioner, I will prioritize transparency in spending, stronger oversight of contracts and agreements, and better communication between government and residents. I want people to clearly understand how decisions impact their daily lives. One initiative I would lead is improving public access to information so residents can easily track major projects, spending, and policy decisions.

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

First, responsible spending to ensure every dollar is tied to a clear public benefit, especially in public safety, infrastructure, public schools, and essential services. Second, cost control and efficiency by identifying waste, renegotiating contracts when necessary, and making sure we're not overpaying for services. Third, smart economic development by supporting growth that creates jobs while also protecting the character of our communities. Growth should benefit residents, not burden them with overcrowded roads or strained services.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

Protecting constitutional liberties begins with respecting them in every decision we make. These rights are the foundation of our nation and exist to guard against government overreach. I will support policies that ensure residents can speak freely, gather peacefully, and practice their faith without unnecessary interference. Personal autonomy matters, and our Constitution reflects that principle. Local government must operate within its proper role. Focused on serving residents, not expanding beyond its authority. Transparency is essential to protecting these freedoms. When government is open, accountable, and clear in its actions, it builds public trust and helps ensure the rights of every citizen are respected and upheld.

5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

A strong community protects its most vulnerable. I am criminal justice graduate with a human services concentration. This issue is very dear to me. I support enforcing laws that combat human trafficking and ensuring law enforcement has the resources to protect victims. I also support partnerships with local organizations that serve the homeless, elderly, and families in need. The county could be the bridge to connect these services together, so services are not missed and better streamlined. At the county level, we must ensure services are effective, accessible, and focused on dignity and care. That includes supporting life, protecting those at risk, and making sure no one is overlooked.

Independent Survey by



6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Many of the moral principles reflected in the Ten Commandments such as honesty, respect for others, and the value of life have influenced legal systems throughout history. Elements of those values can be seen in the foundations of our own laws. That said, the role of local government is to uphold the Constitution and serve all residents fairly. My focus is on ensuring our policies reflect strong, shared values like integrity, accountability, and respect for others, while protecting the rights of every individual in our community. Good governance requires balancing moral responsibility with constitutional duty, all while making decisions that are both principled and fair to all.

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Automated speed cameras, like other law enforcement tools, can serve a purpose. Especially in school zones where safety is critical. Protecting children and reducing speeding in these areas should be a priority. However, their use must be grounded in transparency and accountability. I support clear oversight, including public disclosure of contracts, how revenue is used, and regular independent audits. Drivers should also be clearly notified when cameras are in operation. There are valid concerns around due process, and those must be taken seriously. Any enforcement tool should respect constitutional protections while maintaining public trust. With the right safeguards in place, we can improve safety without compromising fairness.

8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

Transparency and accountability are essential in land-use decisions. Honestly, in all decisions. We don't want to erode public trust. I support stronger disclosure requirements for potential conflicts of interest and clear recusal policies when conflicts exist. I am a systems and operations professional. So, I want to look at how we do things now and find better ways to increase transparency. Residents should also have better access to information about proposed developments and decisions. Development should involve the community, not happen without their input. Decisions must reflect the long-term interests of residents, not just private gain.

Independent Survey by



9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

As a county, we already have several tools to manage growth, but we need to use them more intentionally. Hamilton County relies on comprehensive planning and area plans to guide where and how development should occur based on infrastructure capacity and transportation access. We also use zoning, building permits, and subdivision regulations to control development patterns and ensure projects meet standards. Regional planning through the RPA helps align land use with roads and infrastructure. My approach would be to better align land use decisions with infrastructure capacity, prioritize capital planning ahead of growth, and advocate at the state level for tools that ensure growth pays for itself.

10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

I'm open to the idea if it leads to better representation and more focused decision-making for residents in unincorporated areas. Those communities often have different needs and concerns than incorporated municipalities, and their voices should be clearly heard in the planning process. Before making that decision, I would want to evaluate whether it improves transparency, efficiency, and outcomes for residents. If it does, then it's worth pursuing in a thoughtful and structured way.

Independent Survey by



**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

DAVID SHARPE

We made multiple attempts to communicate with David Sharpe; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

Dist.: Dist. 6

Independent Survey by

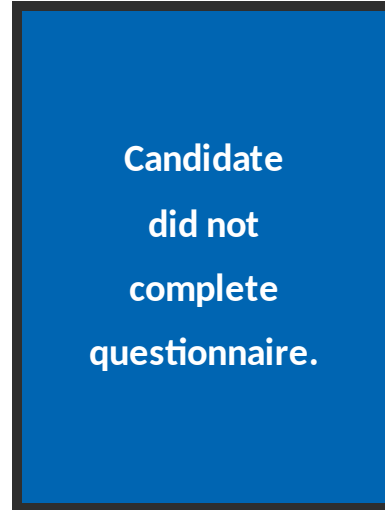


County Commission Dist. 7 Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Laura Bertrand



Lee Helton

Independent Survey by





LAURA BERTRAND

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 7
Campaign Website:	facebook.com/profile.php?id=61585033273237
Email Address:	lauragoeshamilton@icloud.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Counselor
Military Background:	none
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	11 years

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

The purpose of the commission is to improve the lives of the people who live in Hamilton County by focusing on thoughtful development, education for all people, infrastructure, maintaining the natural beauty, and focusing on the health of residents.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

As a counselor I spend all day listening to people, and what I have learned is that many of the problems they seek mental health treatment for would be better addressed by improving their physical health, their social relationships, and getting them more money. Therefore, my initiatives would revolve around better paying jobs and decreases to housing costs, creation of third spaces, and caring for the creation all around us.

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

Firstly, thoughtful developing of new homes with a focus on how that will impact our current infrastructure and have negative environment impacts. Secondly, would like to see more local businesses moving into my district specifically. Thirdly, work to increase the public's knowledge about the commission's purpose, resolutions, and agendas.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

Our First Amendment rights are the cornerstone of freedom in this country, they set the precedent for what comes after them. More importantly, they are the ways in which our neighbors and constituents tell us what is important to them. As for the question of what I as a commissioner would do to protect them, is not infringe on them. I will also be available to the press and to petitions for the redress of grievances

5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

I believe the best ways to support the most vulnerable in our community is by listening to them about what they need. The homeless need homes that they can afford, currently housing in Hamilton County is swiftly outpacing people's earnings. Ergo, bringing down the cost of housing and other essentials would have a wide benefit decreasing homelessness, poverty, and human trafficking. However, better paying jobs and housing does not fix all the problems. As a commissioner I would advocate to help provide economic assistance to local leaders who feel called to these service needs while maintaining support for existing programs.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

I would prefer to see the teachings of Christ as bedrock for our moral principles. This would include serving "the least of these", forgiveness, compassion, and mercy.

Independent Survey by



7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Honestly, I had not really thought about this until reading this question, I would need to do a lot more research and thought into it. My immediate reaction is anything that improves safety within school zones is a good thing, in other locations I need to think about it more.

8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

We need more discussion from the people affected by zoning policies to have opportunities to discuss it and voice their concerns. This could be done through more utilization of technology for planning purposes such as social media, using connection platforms for meetings, and surveys. I also think that our land usage should have consistent environment considerations so that erosion, street run off, and pollution to our air do not affect our communities. I do not have any connections with land developers or others in the construction field as conflicts of interest.

9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

In district 7 there are many considerations for how to develop moving forward, as there is the rural space of Apison and the very developed East Brainerd (which is already a nightmare at 7:30am on weekdays). I think that we need to consider how to adapt our schools and roads before changing zoning rules while involving our emergency services into these discussions most specifically Tri-Community Fire and the Sheriff's Department.

10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

I grew up in an unincorporated town. I do not think we need a separate planning commission, however, we do need more transparency and better communication with the people who live there. The needs of rural residents often get side tracked by the developers who do not consider how construction run off or explosive building will impact local farms.

Independent Survey by



**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

LEE HELTON

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Lee Helton; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

Dist.: Dist. 7

Independent Survey by



County Commission Dist. 8 Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Relect Mike Chauncey



Joshua Wichman

Independent Survey by





RELECT MIKE CHAUNCEY

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 8
Campaign Website:	NA
Email Address:	NA
Occupation/Vocation:	Real Estate Broker
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	50

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

Similar to my service to the East Ridge City Council but at the County level, balancing legislative and executive roles to manage local services and community growth.

2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

My fundamental purpose as a commissioner is to translate community needs into actionable policy through the passage of resolutions. I want to act as a bridge between residents and local government.

Independent Survey by



3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

Education and School Facilities, Infrastructure and Road Improvements.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

The County Commission plays a significant role in upholding Constitutional Liberties by ensuring that local laws, spending, and operations respect the fundamental rights of residents.

5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

My personal views "Protecting Life" as its most essential mandate, often referred to as the responsibility to protect the "health, safety, and welfare" of its citizens.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Moral Values is typically viewed through the lens of community standards, ethical governance, and the protection of the family unit.

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Commissioners often focus on placing cameras in school zones to protect children from high-speed traffic.

8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

Constitutional Liberties must be protected. They must respect a landowner's right to use their property while protecting the neighbors' right to the "quiet enjoyment" of their own homes.

Independent Survey by



9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

I support actions ensuring that infrastructure precedes or keeps pace with development.

10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

Plan Hamilton purpose is to implement a newly approved growth plan that balances development with lower density in rural areas (1.5 units per acre on septic) to prevent infrastructure strain while still allowing for expansion.

Independent Survey by





JOSHUA WICHMAN

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 8
Campaign Website:	electwichman.com
Email Address:	electwichman@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Self Employed
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	Have lived in several places but have been in Chattanooga for roughly 25 years throughout my life.

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

County Commissioners represent their district. The decisions they make should reflect the interests of their constituents, not their own. The Commission should operate with honesty and transparency, keeping the public informed about the process and items on the agenda. Ultimately, the Commission exists to set responsible budgets and enact legislation that grows Hamilton County in a way that benefits all residents.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

On the Commission, I would focus on two things, supporting our schools and managing growth wisely. We need to boost teacher retention and provide resources so that every school can succeed. The Commission can play an important role in supporting that. On development, I believe growth should serve residents by providing the necessary infrastructure to support projects, bringing quality jobs that pay a living wage and creating real opportunity for young people to build a life here in Hamilton County, rather than having to leave it. Our development should work for us not the other way around.

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

My top spending priorities would be affordable and workforce housing, community infrastructure that serves all residents and resources to support our schools and teachers. These investments directly impact quality of life and are fundamental for sustainable growth. On savings, I will inherit a budget I had no hand in approving, so my priority will be to closely examine and responsibly audit it to ensure the next budget fully encompasses the needs of my constituents. For economic development, I envision development that is planned responsibly so growth pays for itself rather than burdening existing taxpayers, attracting quality jobs that pay a living wage, and emerging industries that strengthen our economy while preserving the Hamilton County we all love.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

While these protections are not direct responsibilities of the county commission, it is within our power to uphold these ideals with honest and transparent government. This means being accessible to all residents and conducting the business of government in an open forum that welcomes participation from all who wish to engage.

5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

Protecting the vulnerable should be a top priority for commissioners, it is why I chose to serve. For those affected by human trafficking, I will advocate for strong county partnerships with local organizations and community led programs already doing this critical work. For our poorest residents, those experiencing homelessness, and our elderly neighbors, I will champion affordable housing, accessible services, and community led programs that allow everyone to live with dignity in Hamilton County. Strong families are the foundation of a strong community, and every decision I make on the Commission will reflect that.

Independent Survey by



6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

The values at the core of the Ten Commandments, honesty, respect for others, and care for our neighbors are values I hold deeply and that I believe should guide good governance. These are also values shared across many faiths and by people of good character everywhere. Government serves all residents regardless of their background, and laws work best when they reflect our shared moral commitments to each other.

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Automated speed cameras, particularly in school zones, are an effective tool for deterring dangerous driving and protecting public safety. I support their use where they serve that purpose. However, strong oversight is essential, data collected should be used solely for enforcement and never to surveil or track individuals. On the constitutional question, every driver should have a clear path to contest a citation. When used responsibly, speed cameras can save lives while respecting the rights and privacy of all residents.

8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

Land-use decisions shape the future of our communities and must be made with full transparency and in the best interest of residents. All zoning and planning meetings should be open to the public and provide genuine opportunity for community input. Where developers have influence on planning boards and committees, residents must have equal representation, decisions that affect neighborhoods should reflect the people who live in them, not just those who profit from them. Accountability in land-use decisions is not optional and is part of a government that works for everyone.

9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

The current approach is not keeping pace, residents are experiencing the consequences of development that has outrun our roads, emergency services, and community infrastructure. I will push for rigorous accountability in our planning processes and a thorough audit of the tools and resources we currently have to ensure they are being applied effectively. Hamilton County growth should strengthen our communities not strain them.

Independent Survey by



10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

The Regional Planning Agency already serves unincorporated areas and I do not believe creating a separate commission is the answer. If residents in unincorporated areas do not feel adequately represented, we should fix that within the existing system instead of creating additional bureaucracy. Duplicating planning infrastructure wastes time, resources and risks creating further gaps in the regional coordination we need. The solution is better representation and accountability within the structure we have.

Independent Survey by

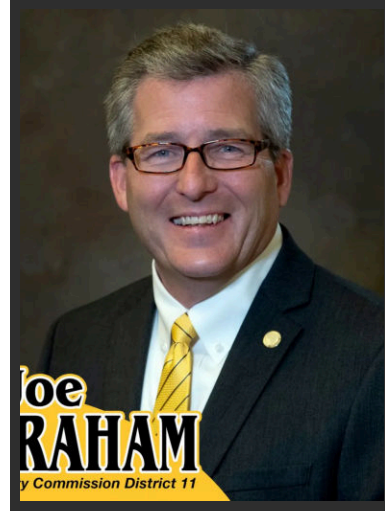


County Commission Dist. 11 Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Montrell Besley



Joseph "Joe" Graham

Independent Survey by





MONTRELL BESLEY

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 11
Campaign Website:	MontrellBesley.com
Email Address:	montrell@montrellbesley.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Local Business Owner/ Entrepreneur
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	44

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

County Commission exists to represent the people and ensure county government works for them, not the other way around. Its role is to set responsible policy, approve budgets, and provide strong oversight so taxpayer dollars are invested where they matter most: safe communities, strong schools, reliable infrastructure, and real opportunities for families.

But the Commission should be more than a voting body, it should be a voice for the community. Commissioners must listen, ask tough questions, and challenge decisions that don't serve the public interest.

For too many residents, government feels distant or unresponsive. That must change.

The role of a County Commissioner is simple: Show up, Speak up, and Make sure EVERY Neighborhood has a Seat at the Table.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

My areas of focus are youth opportunity, community engagement, and strengthening neighborhoods that have historically been overlooked. Through my work mentoring young people, supporting families, and building partnerships across our community, I've seen how the right investments can change the trajectory of a neighborhood.

As County Commissioner, I would prioritize expanding youth development programs, workforce pathways, and mentorship opportunities so more young people can see a future for themselves right here in Hamilton County. I'm also committed to increasing transparency and improving communication between county government and residents.

My goal is simple: Create pathways to opportunity while ensuring every neighborhood in District 11 has a STRONG voice in county government.

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

My top priority is ensuring county resources are invested in ways that create long-term opportunity and strong communities. First, I support strategic investments in youth development and workforce pathways, including partnerships with schools, mentoring programs, and job training that connect young people to real careers in our region.

Second, I believe in responsible budgeting and transparency. Taxpayer dollars should be spent efficiently, with regular reviews to ensure programs produce measurable results and reduce waste.

Third, I support economic development that reaches every part of the county, especially historically underserved neighborhoods; by supporting small businesses, encouraging entrepreneurship, and improving infrastructure that attracts investment and quality local jobs.

STRONG communities and a STRONG economy go hand in hand.

Independent Survey by



4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

Protecting the Constitutional rights of every resident is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of government. As County Commissioner, I will support policies that uphold the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, including freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and the free exercise of religion. These liberties are not partisan, they are American values.

Government should never silence voices, discourage civic participation, or interfere with lawful expressions of faith and belief. My role will be to ensure county policies are applied fairly, consistently, and with respect for the rights of all residents.

A strong community is one where people feel free to Speak, Gather, Worship, and Participate in civic life WITHOUT FEAR.

5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

As a County Commissioner, I believe the strength of our community is measured by how we protect those who cannot always advocate for themselves. I support a comprehensive approach to safety and dignity:

The Trafficked: Funding specialized law enforcement task forces and survivor support services.

The Elderly: Strengthening elder abuse protections and public guardianship programs.

The Poor and Homeless: Prioritizing "Housing First" initiatives and workforce development to break the cycle of poverty.

The Unborn: Expanding access to maternal health resources and prenatal care to support both mothers and children.

By using our budget and local ordinances to shield the vulnerable, we ensure Hamilton County remains a place where every life is valued and protected.

Independent Survey by



6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

The moral principles reflected in the Ten Commandments; values like honesty, respect for others, and community have influenced ethical thinking for generations and guide many people in their personal lives. At the same time, our system of government is built on the Constitution, which protects both freedom of religion and freedom from government establishing any one religious tradition.

As County Commissioner, my responsibility would be to ensure laws and policies are rooted in fairness, justice, and equal protection for all residents. Those values often overlap with many faith traditions, but government must serve people of every background and belief.

My focus will be policies that reflect shared civic values: Integrity, Responsibility, and Care for our Neighbors.

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Public safety, especially in school zones, must always come first. If automated speed cameras are used, their purpose should be to slow traffic and protect children, not generate revenue. Their use must include strong oversight, clear signage, and transparent reporting so residents know where cameras are located, how violations are reviewed, and how revenue is used.

Drivers also deserve fair due process, including a clear appeals process and consistent enforcement. Technology can support safety, but it should never replace accountability or constitutional protections.

My focus is ensuring any traffic safety program prioritizes safety, fairness, and transparency for the public.

Independent Survey by



8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

Public trust in land use decisions depends on transparency, accountability, and strong ethical standards. I support clear conflict-of-interest policies requiring full disclosure of financial ties, campaign contributions, or business relationships between developers and planning officials. When conflicts exist, officials should recuse themselves from discussions and votes.

The public also deserves greater transparency, including clear notice of proposed developments, accessible meetings, and meaningful opportunities for input before decisions are made.

Land use decisions shape our future, so they must be guided by what's best for residents, not private interests. As County Commissioner, I will champion open government, ethical leadership, and community driven planning.

9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

Hamilton County has tools to pace growth responsibly, including the planning and zoning process, subdivision regulations, infrastructure planning, and coordination with municipalities and regional partners. These allow the county to review development, assess infrastructure needs, and guide where and how growth occurs.

As County Commissioner, I would ensure these tools are used more strategically by considering infrastructure like roads, utilities, and emergency services early in the development process. Growth should not outpace our ability to provide safe roads, quality schools, and reliable public safety.

I would also promote stronger collaboration across departments and partners to support long-term sustainability and quality of life.

Smart growth protects both our communities and our future.

Independent Survey by



10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

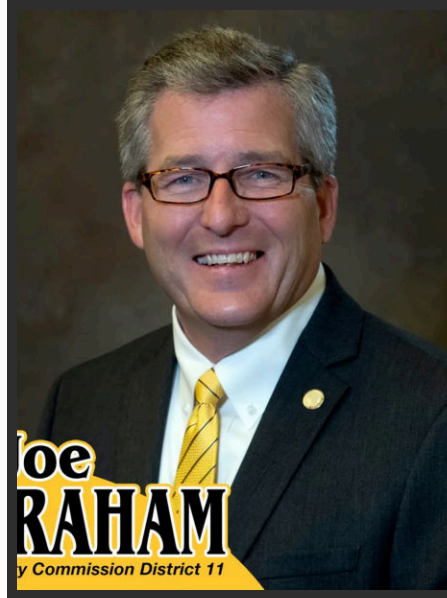
I do not support creating a separate planning commission for unincorporated areas of Hamilton County. While residents in those areas deserve to be heard, adding another planning body could create unnecessary bureaucracy, inconsistent decisions, and a fragmented approach to growth.

Land use planning works best with countywide coordination so infrastructure, transportation, housing, and economic development decisions stay aligned. Splitting the process would make it harder to maintain a clear, long-term vision for responsible growth.

Instead, the focus should be on strengthening transparency, improving public engagement, and ensuring the current planning process fairly represents residents in unincorporated areas.

Independent Survey by





JOSEPH "JOE" GRAHAM

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 11
Campaign Website:	votejoegraham.com
Email Address:	jgraham@accentprintinginc.net
Occupation/Vocation:	Small Business Owner
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	48 years in the same community, which is now district 11, only candidate that actually lives in the district

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

We are the legislative body, one of three branches of Government.

2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

I am the current sitting Commissioner for district 11. I am involved in all of the neighborhood associations that are contained in District 11. I go to all of the neighborhood meetings, clean up days, school functions, and I am in constant contact with the neighborhood presidents. I am a founding member of the neighborhood association in the community that I grew up in. A community that I raised my family in, have businesses in, I am a leader in, volunteer in, and still live in.

Independent Survey by



3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

Education, safe schools and safe neighborhoods. Keeping a watchful eye on our budget and always looking for ways to save. Keeping taxes low and workforce development high to attract new industries.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

Our Constitution is very clear, as a sworn Constitutional Officer of the United States and the state of Tennessee, I took an oath that I take very seriously to uphold and protect these rights.

5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

I will follow the law to protect and serve all of the Hamilton County citizens.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

I will always follow the law and all it protects.

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

I will always follow the law, and protect ones constitutional rights from students to seniors.

8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

Fight for smart growth, and protect property owners rights.

Independent Survey by



9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

When a developer begins a project, make that developer put in the necessary infrastructure needs. Then the tax payers do not have to pay for the necessary infrastructure needs, the developer will. Make available the equipment our first responders and personnel need to keep up with the growth.

10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

No, we all need to come together with all 11 districts. We need to plan our long term future together, no working in silo's. We are all one county.

Independent Survey by

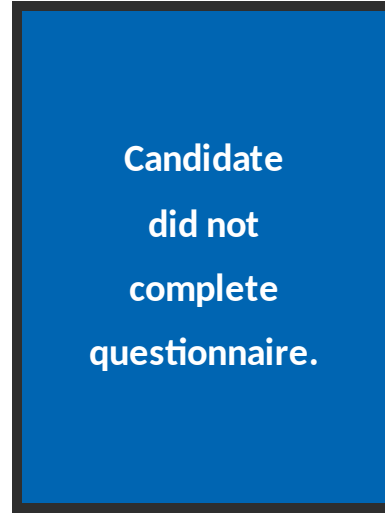


County Commission Uncontested Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



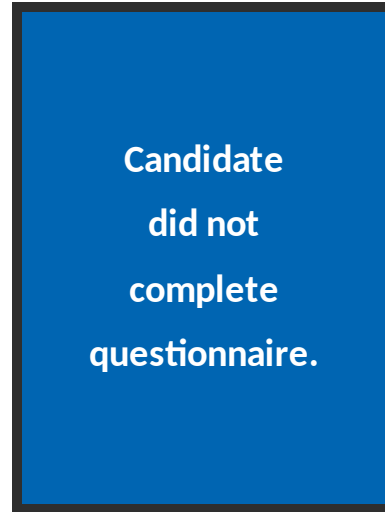
Jeff Eversole (Dist. 10)



Katherlyn Geter (Dist. 5)



Dr. Steve Highlander (Dist. 9)



Warren Mackey (Dist. 4)

Independent Survey by



County Commission Uncontested Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Ken Smith (Dist. 3)

Independent Survey by





JEFF EVERSOLE

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 10
Campaign Website:	VoteJeffEversole.com
Email Address:	j.eversole@gmx.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Business Management
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	30 Years

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

The County Commission exists to serve the people of Hamilton County. Our job is to listen to our constituents, represent their interests, and make decisions that improve the quality of life across the county. Every action we take should reflect the needs of our residents and be handled responsibly and transparently.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

I've focused much of my first term on managing responsible growth in Hamilton County. We've already lowered the number of homes allowed per acre from seven to three, and I plan to keep pushing for responsible development that protects our communities. I'm also working to create the Unincorporated Hamilton County Planning Department so people living outside the city limits have a voice and better resources when it comes to planning decisions in their areas. In my second term I am committed to fulfilling and completing these ongoing initiatives

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

As Chairman of the Finance Committee, I take stewardship of taxpayer dollars seriously. My priorities are:

1. Spending wisely on infrastructure needs like roads and bridges, public safety, and emergency services that directly benefit residents.
2. Finding efficiencies and savings wherever possible to make government run better for less.
3. Supporting smart economic development that brings livable wage jobs, strengthens local businesses, and balances growth with the county's infrastructure without tax increases.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

I'm committed to protecting the Constitutional rights of every resident, whether it's freedom of speech, the right to assemble peacefully, the right to bear arms and the ability to practice one's faith. County policies should always respect these fundamental liberties, and I'll make sure that's a priority in every decision we make.

5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

I believe it's our responsibility to protect those who can't protect themselves. I support laws and programs that defend the unborn, fight human trafficking, and help the elderly, homeless, and economically disadvantaged get the care and resources they need. I'll continue to be an advocate for the right to life initiatives and for those who are most vulnerable in our community.

Independent Survey by



6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Yes. The Ten Commandments give us a moral framework for how to live as God's children. I recently implemented commissioner led prayers at the beginning of each commission meeting. As a leader, it's my responsibility to reflect those principles in government decisions, promoting honesty, respect, and integrity in everything we do.

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

I support using speed cameras only to improve safety, especially around schools. But transparency is key. Residents should know where cameras are, how they're used, and have a fair process to challenge any ticket. Speed enforcement must respect due process and drivers' rights, and I'll make sure those protections are always upheld.

8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

It's critical that planning and zoning decisions are ethical and transparent. I support requiring full disclosure of any relationships or financial ties between developers and committee members. I also back public hearings and resident input for every zoning decision, so decisions are made for the good of the community—not just private interests.

9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

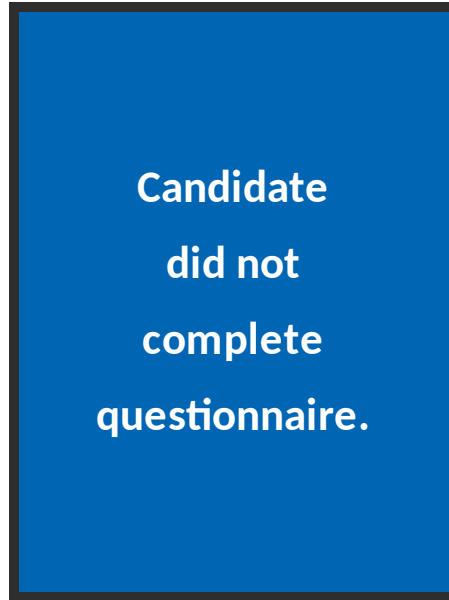
The biggest step right now is creating the Unincorporated Hamilton County Planning Department. This department will help guide growth responsibly, making sure residents' voices are heard, and that infrastructure, roads, and services keep pace with development. My goal is to balance growth with quality of life for everyone.

10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

Yes—I authored the resolution to make it happen. Residents in unincorporated areas deserve just as much say in planning decisions as those in more developed parts of the county. A separate commission ensures fair, responsible growth that benefits all of Hamilton County, not just certain areas.

Independent Survey by





KATHERLYN GETER

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Katherlyn Geter; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

Dist.: Dist. 5

Independent Survey by





DR. STEVE HIGHLANDER

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 9
Campaign Website:	facebook.com/share/1CGEB28Mbf/?mibextid=wwXlfr
Email Address:	dshighlander@yahoo.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Retired Teacher & Minister
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	72

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

To serve and meet the needs of my constituents and the entire county with the help of God

2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

Infrastructure (improving roads, schools, and sewers)

Education - giving the best possible education for each student and making sure all parents' values are honored

Finance - striving to be the best steward possible of every taxpayer dollar by being a watchdog for wasteful expenditures

Independent Survey by



3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

1. Spending on infrastructure to meet the safety and needs of all citizens
2. Trim/revitalize personnel and/or outdated programs within the budget - some personnel could be redirected to an area where they can be more productive
3. Economic Development - be purposeful in encouraging the development of businesses and industries which will provide reasonable wages for our younger generation

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

Initiate, attend, and encourage town hall and other public meetings

Make sure that every citizen has the opportunity to have his or her voice heard

Encourage peaceable assembly and take all measures possible to ensure the safety of all in attendance

Free and unimpeded expression of personal religious beliefs is a God given right that we must protect for all citizens.

5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

We need to follow the teachings of Jesus when He said, "Even as you have done to the least of these, you have done unto me." The psalmist said, "Before my bones were formed in my mother's womb, you knew me." We must take every precaution to care for every human being from the mother's womb until God takes that person home. This would include the weak, the disabled, the homeless, the elderly, and those suffering from the horrors of human trafficking.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

The root of American constitutional law is based on the principles of the Ten Commandments. Whether someone accepts the religious principles therein or not, no better moral code can be codified.

7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Safety is paramount, especially in school zones. If a government agency chooses to use speed camera, that government agency must provide a means for the citizens to see the accuser and rebut the charges when necessary.

Independent Survey by



8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

People making decisions or recommendations or rulings on planning and zoning should not constitute the majority of any board. Direct personal interest must bring about a recusal. It is positive to have those with building knowledge but not as a majority.

9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

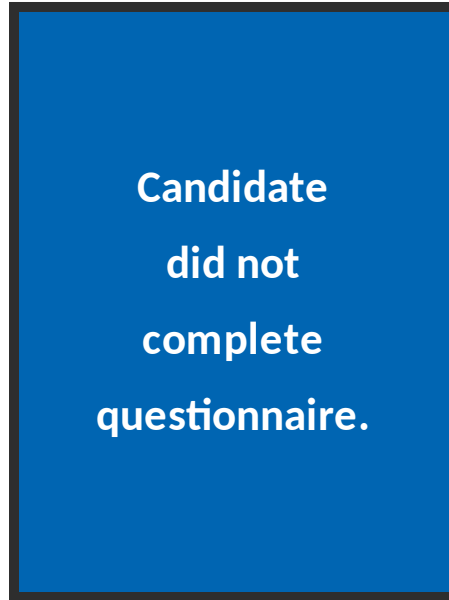
Partially, with my encouragement, the mayor has instituted an unincorporated roads fund. It is a major concern for me that we need to develop infrastructure before and along with major development. Massive growth before infrastructure planning and implementation is dangerous for our citizens. We cannot afford to "kick the can" down the road any longer.

10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

While I see major benefits for an unincorporated planning commission, current state law makes it very difficult to achieve. The state legislature, every municipality, and the current planning commission must all approve the move. Your current county commission voted to institute a planning department for the county which will offer plans based on the needs of county residents as opposed to urban desires.

Independent Survey by





WARREN MACKEY

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Warren Mackey; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

Dist.: Dist. 4

Independent Survey by





KEN SMITH

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 3
Campaign Website:	electkensmith.com
Email Address:	commissionerkensmith@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Technology Executive
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	36

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Commission?

The County Commission is responsible for representing residents, setting the county budget, approving zoning and land use decisions, and ensuring taxpayer dollars are used responsibly. Commissioners also provide oversight of county departments and make policy decisions that affect infrastructure, public safety, and county services. In short, the role is to balance responsible growth, fiscal discipline, and quality of life for the people we represent.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Commissioner?

My professional background is in engineering and technology leadership, so I bring a strong focus on data driven decision making, transparency, and accountability. My initiatives focus on infrastructure improvements, responsible growth in the unincorporated areas, and making sure county investments, particularly in roads and schools, keep pace with our growing population.

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

First, infrastructure investments, especially roads and public safety, to keep up with growth. Second, responsible budgeting that avoids unnecessary tax increases while protecting core services. Third, supporting economic development that brings quality jobs to Hamilton County while maintaining the character of our communities.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As County Commissioner, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

Protecting constitutional liberties begins with respecting the limits of local government authority. The County Commission should ensure its policies respect the First Amendment rights of speech, assembly, and religious exercise. My focus is making sure county government operates transparently, treats residents fairly, and avoids unnecessary regulation that interferes with those rights.

5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

Many of these issues are addressed primarily at the state and federal level, but counties can support programs that protect vulnerable populations. That includes partnering with law enforcement and nonprofits to combat human trafficking, supporting services for seniors, and working with community organizations that assist those experiencing poverty or homelessness. Local government should focus on practical support and coordination with agencies that provide these services.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Our laws are grounded in the Constitution and the rule of law. Many moral principles reflected in religious traditions, including the Ten Commandments, also appear in the broader ethical foundations of our legal system, such as prohibitions on theft or violence. However, government must operate within the framework of the Constitution and respect religious freedom for all citizens.

Independent Survey by



7) Speed cameras: How would you address the use of automated speed cameras within the county (including those in school zones)? What oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Public safety, especially in school zones, is important, but enforcement must also respect due process and maintain public trust. Any use of automated enforcement should include clear signage, transparency about how citations are issued, and oversight to ensure it is focused on safety rather than revenue generation. These systems should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are fair and effective.

8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

Transparency and disclosure are essential. Members of planning or zoning bodies should clearly disclose financial or personal interests related to development proposals and recuse themselves when appropriate. Public meetings, open records, and clear review processes help ensure land use decisions are made based on the interests of residents rather than private influence.

9) Managing County Growth and Infrastructure: What strategies and/or resources does the county currently have to better pace growth in Hamilton County so infrastructure, roads and emergency services can keep up with development? How would you use these tools to address this issue?

The county uses tools such as zoning authority, infrastructure planning, and coordination with the planning commission to help manage growth. The key is ensuring that development decisions consider road capacity, public safety access, and school infrastructure. Responsible growth requires aligning development approvals with the ability of infrastructure to support it.

10) Planning for Unincorporated Areas: Do you support having a separate planning commission for the unincorporated areas? Please explain your reasoning, and if applicable, what steps you would take.

Yes. The priorities and challenges in unincorporated Hamilton County are often different from those inside the City of Chattanooga. A planning structure that better reflects those differences can help ensure residents in the unincorporated areas have a stronger voice in how growth and development are managed in their communities.

Independent Survey by



2026 Hamilton County General Election Voter Guide

Candidates for

County Mayor

Survey Questions for 2026 General County Mayor Candidates

- 1) **Purpose:** What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Mayor?
- 2) **Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives:** What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Mayor?
- 3) **Budget:** What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?
- 4) **Constitutional Liberties:** As the County Mayor, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?
- 5) **Protecting Life:** What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?
- 6) **Moral Values:** Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?
- 7) **Speed cameras:** As mayor, will you continue to enforce speed cameras in school zones and residential areas throughout the county? If so, what oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?
- 8) **Zoning/Planning:** What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?
- 9) **Immigration:** What role, if any, do you believe the Mayor's office should have in guiding Hamilton County's cooperation with ICE and federal immigration enforcement?
- 10) **Adult Entertainment:** The Adult Entertainment Act (AEA) in Tennessee restricts certain adult performances, such as drag shows, in front of minors. Do you personally support the AEA, and regardless of your personal views, how would your office ensure its enforcement?
- 11) **Religious Freedom in the Workplace:** How would you ensure that government employees in Hamilton County are treated fairly and not discriminated against based on their religious beliefs, including situations involving workplace policies on gender identity, pronoun use (compelled speech), or related hiring practices?

Independent Survey by

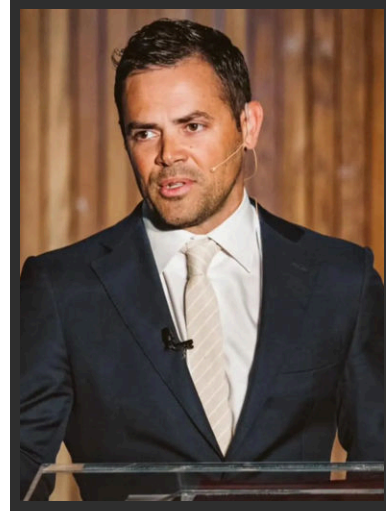


County Mayor Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Mark Herndon



Weston Wamp

Independent Survey by





MARK HERNDON

Candidate Information

Campaign Website:	votemarkformayor.com
Email Address:	herndonforhamilton@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Contractor
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	25 years

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Mayor?

The County Mayor's role is to advocate for the people of Hamilton County and ensure their priorities are heard and acted on by the Commission. The mayor oversees the budget, guides economic development, and influences how tax dollars are spent. As your mayor, I believe this work should never be hidden from the public. Transparency and honesty are essential to good leadership, and the position should always serve the voters who entrusted it with power. My goal is to make county government accessible, accountable, and focused on the needs of the people rather than political convenience.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Mayor?

Education and affordability are the two issues that shape nearly every conversation I've had with residents. Our children deserve schools that meet their needs and a county that can sustain them after graduation. That means listening to teachers, funding classrooms responsibly, and ensuring families can afford to live and work here. When parents are forced to work multiple jobs just to get by, children lose the support they need at home — and that affects their future. I've also heard deep concerns about the mishandling of our health department. I want to expand essential services, not dismantle them, because strong communities require strong public health.

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

My budget priorities center on responsible investment and long-term planning. For spending, I will prioritize education, public safety, and infrastructure — the foundations of a thriving county. Savings should come from a fiscally responsible administration that collaborates across departments and communities, ensuring tax dollars are used transparently and effectively. For economic development, we must manage growth sustainably so it doesn't outpace our ability to support it. That includes thoughtful planning for assets like McDonald Farm, investing in infrastructure such as sewer capacity, and addressing inflated administrative budgets that divert resources away from frontline services. Growth should benefit residents, not just developers, and we must lay groundwork now for the next generation.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As the County Mayor, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

I will champion the constitutional rights of all Hamilton County residents. Government has no business deciding what people say, where they gather, or how they worship. Its responsibility is to ensure that speech is protected, that peaceful assembly is safeguarded, and that no faith receives preferential treatment. While the mayor's authority in this area is limited, I will always advocate for a clear separation between religion and government. Personal beliefs shape who we are, but they should not be used to elevate one religion over another. Freedom means every individual has the right to choose their faith without government influence.

Independent Survey by



5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

My responsibility as mayor is to represent all of Hamilton County and ensure legislation protects the rights and dignity of every resident. That includes supporting collaboration among nonprofits, faith-based groups, and community partners who work daily to protect vulnerable people with limited resources. I will push the county to contribute meaningfully to these efforts, especially for unhoused residents and those who have been neglected. When it comes to reproductive rights, the law is set at the state level, but I believe we cannot impose ethics on others without being willing to support the outcomes. (i.e. paid parental leave, healthcare, free and reduced meals) We must invest in our health department and offer assistance - not punish people for systemic failures.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

My moral compass is shaped by my faith, but the government must serve everyone — not just those who share my beliefs. Many principles in the Ten Commandments align with existing laws, but freedom of religion requires that no single faith guide our policies. Life is more complex than a list of rules, and governance must make room for people's lived experiences. My decisions will be grounded in integrity, but the role of government is not to enforce religious doctrine. It is to uphold the Constitution, protect individual freedoms, and ensure that every resident — regardless of belief — is treated with fairness and respect.

7) Speed cameras: As mayor, will you continue to enforce speed cameras in school zones and residential areas throughout the county? If so, what oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

Right now, speed cameras function more as a weak revenue stream than an effective safety tool. They issue tickets without meaningfully slowing traffic, and that doesn't build trust or improve safety. I believe we can do better. Any approach to traffic calming should involve community input. Instead of relying on automated enforcement, we should explore design-based solutions and neighborhood-driven ideas that actually make roads safer for children and families (i.e. trees/light poles/planters, raised medians/crosswalks, dedicated pedestrian or bike lanes, roundabouts)

Independent Survey by



8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

Land-use decisions must be transparent, ethical, and free from conflicts of interest. When developers sit on planning bodies or have access to information unavailable to the public, it creates an uneven playing field and erodes trust. I support policies that prevent committee members from participating in decisions where they stand to benefit financially, and I believe developers should not have insider access to growth plans that allow them to buy land before communities even know what's coming. Growth should benefit neighbors, not just large developers. Equal opportunity, clear disclosure, and strong guardrails are essential to restoring fairness in our planning process.

9) Immigration: What role, if any, do you believe the Mayor's office should have in guiding Hamilton County's cooperation with ICE and federal immigration enforcement?

I believe in law enforcement that is accountable, transparent, and focused on keeping our neighborhoods safe — not acting as an extension of federal immigration enforcement without clear oversight. Programs like 287(g) risk pulling deputies away from their core mission and eroding trust in the communities they serve. We can support effective policing without sacrificing civil liberties or turning neighbors into targets. My priority is ensuring county departments maintain trust so immigrant communities can feel safe participating in civic life. Cooperation should never come at the expense of safety or humanity. Welcoming the stranger is a direct expression of faith, and how we treat the vulnerable is how we treat Christ Himself (Matthew 25:35-40)

10) Adult Entertainment: The Adult Entertainment Act (AEA) in Tennessee restricts certain adult performances, such as drag shows, in front of minors. Do you personally support the AEA, and regardless of your personal views, how would your office ensure its enforcement?

Decisions about what children are exposed to should rest with parents and guardians. The Adult Entertainment Act is state law, and my responsibility is to ensure that county departments enforce it fairly and consistently. At the same time, we must avoid using government power to target specific groups or forms of expression. My approach will be grounded in respect for families, clarity in enforcement, and a commitment to ensuring that no community feels singled out or politicized.

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11) Religious Freedom in the Workplace: How would you ensure that government employees in Hamilton County are treated fairly and not discriminated against based on their religious beliefs, including situations involving workplace policies on gender identity, pronoun use (compelled speech), or related hiring practices?

Hamilton County should be a model employer — a place where people of all backgrounds feel respected and able to serve their community. That means protecting employees from discrimination based on religion while also ensuring a workplace grounded in respect, professionalism, and inclusion. Our workforce should reflect the diversity of our county, and policies should support that diversity rather than restrict it. Freedom of religion and freedom of expression must coexist with a safe, welcoming environment for all employees. When people feel valued, they can do their best work for the residents they serve.

Independent Survey by





WESTON WAMP

Candidate Information

Campaign Website:	westonwamp.com
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Occupation/Vocation:	County Mayor
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	Lifetime

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Mayor?

State law defines the County Mayor as the Chief Executive Officer of county government who is responsible for overseeing day-to-day operations and guiding the county financially as its fiscal agent. Practically, the the role is a leadership position that comes with endless opportunities to serve the people of Hamilton County. Sometimes that is as simple as visiting schools and engaging with students and sometimes it is as complex as conducting ongoing diligence of economic development agreements on behalf of taxpayers. Often, the interests of the majority of residents countywide are different than municipalities within the county, so I see the role of County Mayor as speaking for the county as a whole.

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2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Mayor?

As a candidate, I promised to focus on expanding career and technical education and promote investments into school facilities and road infrastructure. We have followed through on those promises with \$300+ million in school facility upgrades and nearly \$20 million in road safety improvements. Importantly, we have made these investments while modernizing the operations of county government and protecting taxpayers by cutting waste and proposing balanced budgets at the lowest property tax rate since 1941. I am particularly proud that across Hamilton County, enrollment in vocational education is up dramatically and we are in the process of opening a large career and technical campus in downtown Chattanooga that will carry the spirit of Kirkman into the future.

3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?

Spending priorities: 1) public education with a focus on vocational education, 2) public safety with a focus on first responder pay, and 3) road infrastructure to alleviate traffic and improve safety.

Savings priorities: 1) sell properties and assets owned by the county that can be better used by the private sector, 2) continue to reduce the number of county employees by promoting efficiency, and 3) continue to negotiate stronger deals with developers and new employers so that tax dollars are not appropriated or abated without strong justification and accountability.

Economic priorities: 1) expanded vocational education, 2) continue to strengthen accountability in PILOTs and TIFs, and 3) focus on recruiting jobs we would want our own children to have.

4) Constitutional Liberties: As the County Mayor, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?

The First Amendment of the Constitution sets our country apart and must be honored and protected in local government at all times. I will steadfastly protect Constitutional liberties to the extent I am allowed under Tennessee state law.

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5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?

Over the last few years, Hamilton County has made new, exciting investments in our youngest and oldest citizens. From the Center for Thriving Families, which serves new parents, to our Parents as Teachers in-home counseling program, we are looking for opportunities to support our youngest citizens and their parents. We have also have included new funding in the county budget for organizations supporting teen mothers and victims of domestic and sexual assault. We have honored seniors by doubling the county's match of the senior property tax relief program, and we opened the county's first senior center at the former Harrison Elementary. The county's Homeless Health Care Center continues to set the bar in serving our community's homeless population.

6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

The Ten Commandments is an excellent moral framework and the laws of our land should be aligned with the ideals that inspired the founding of our country. That being said, we are a pluralistic nation, not a theocracy.

7) Speed cameras: As mayor, will you continue to enforce speed cameras in school zones and residential areas throughout the county? If so, what oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?

I support efforts to curb speeding, particularly in school zones and residential areas -- however, I do not support speed cameras. As an alternative, my office has led efforts to install driver feedback signs on busy roads in the county.

8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?

Recently, I announced support for a proposal to create a dedicated county planning department to increase transparency and accountability in planning. The Regional Planning Commission needs to have a broader set of perspectives among its members -- particularly as it concerns how growth will affect public school enrollment.

9) Immigration: What role, if any, do you believe the Mayor's office should have in guiding Hamilton County's cooperation with ICE and federal immigration enforcement?

State law places this authority with the Office of the Sheriff.

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10) Adult Entertainment: The Adult Entertainment Act (AEA) in Tennessee restricts certain adult performances, such as drag shows, in front of minors. Do you personally support the AEA, and regardless of your personal views, how would your office ensure its enforcement?

Yes, I support it. However, enforcement would not be within the purview of the County Mayor's office.

11) Religious Freedom in the Workplace: How would you ensure that government employees in Hamilton County are treated fairly and not discriminated against based on their religious beliefs, including situations involving workplace policies on gender identity, pronoun use (compelled speech), or related hiring practices?

Hamilton County is in strong alignment with the State of Tennessee, which has recently passed state laws meant to further protect all citizens from workplace discrimination.

Independent Survey by



**2026 Hamilton County General Election
Voter Guide**

Candidates for

**County School
Board**

Survey Questions for 2026 General County School Board Candidates

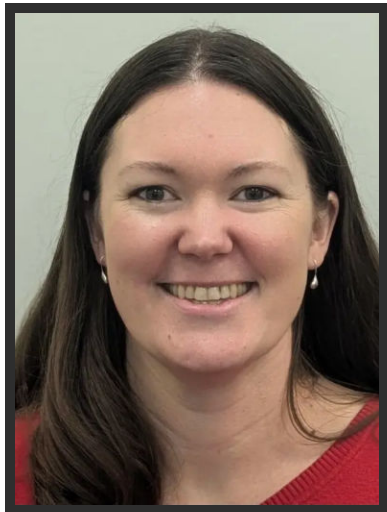
- 1) **Purpose:** What do you view as the purpose and role of the County School Board?
- 2) **Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives:** What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a County School Board member?
- 3) **Moral Values:** Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?
- 4) **Parental Rights:** What is the best way to involve parents in the student's education? Who do you believe is the most important stakeholder in a student's education?
- 5) **Finances:** Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County. In what areas do you see room for improvement in its management, and how would you address these challenges?
- 6) **Preventing School Violence:** In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, Tennessee has strengthened school safety laws, but many parents continue to express concern in this area. What additional strategies or policy changes would you support in Hamilton County to prevent school shootings, foster community well-being, and protect the rights of students and staff?
- 7) **Sex Ed Instruction:** How should the Hamilton County school district select and source materials for sex education? Should this instruction be provided in schools, strictly at home, or a combination of both? Which organizations, if any, do you believe should be restricted from providing materials, and what is your rationale?
- 8) **Racial equity:** How should the school district approach teaching racial equity, and what role, if any, should diversity, equity and inclusion play in the curriculum?
- 9) **Instruction of LGBTQ Issues within Schools:** How should Hamilton County schools approach teaching topics related to LGBTQ issues?
- 10) **Gender Identity Instruction:** Should Gender Ideology be taught or encouraged within the public school system? Why, or why not?
- 11) **Immigration Status:** How should the school districts address enrollment concerning children of illegal immigrants? Is this a strain on our system that takes away opportunities from citizens and those with legal immigration status? Should additional documentation be required beyond the basic proof of address we have now?

Independent Survey by



County School Board Dist. 3 Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Ashley R. Dillon



Sandy Pricer



Dr. Ruth Walker

Independent Survey by





ASHLEY R. DILLON

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 3
Campaign Website:	facebook.com/people/Ashley-Dillon-For-School-Board-District-3/61588307505894
Email Address:	Ashleydillon4hamiltoncoschools@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Licensed Professional Counselor and small business owner
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	17

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County School Board?

The purpose and role of the county school board is to advise, hire, and, if necessary, fire the superintendent; establish the budget for county schools; and make the policies that govern them. Practically speaking, this means helping to identify and establish goals and a vision for countywide education. The school board acts as a liaison between the community and the school administration on matters of policy. It listens to and communicates suggestions from community members to the administration. The school board also provides accountability for the public school system.

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2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a County School Board member?

My area of expertise is mental health care for children, adolescents, and families. I am a mother of three children, two of which are current Hamilton County students. I intend to work actively to increase communication and transparency between the schools, parents, and myself as a future board member. As a licensed professional counselor, I am trained to consider safety from both a physical and mental health perspective. As a mom, I have a vested interest in ensuring our schools are the best they can be. Our schools directly impact families in our area for years to come. I intend to work diligently to help students achieve by focusing on essential academic subjects creating future effective and educated citizens.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Whether or not government laws, ordinances, and regulations are intended to follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments, they often reflect them due to the foundation of our country being rooted in biblical principles. Removing the influence of the Ten Commandments would mean disregarding many of the ideas that helped shape our nation's founding.

The Ten Commandments are foundational to both Christian and Jewish traditions around the world. They have helped establish consistent moral expectations across cultures for thousands of years. To remove the moral principles of the Ten Commandments from society would create a void that would be filled with potentially less beneficial ideas.

4) Parental Rights: What is the best way to involve parents in the student's education? Who do you believe is the most important stakeholder in a student's education?

The best way to involve parents in their students' education is to increase clear consistent communication across the county. Some teachers excel at communication through Remind messages and PowerSchool updates. Requiring parents to sign off on assignments, memos, and classroom communications ensures that they have at least seen what is happening at school. Increasing volunteer opportunities could further strengthen relationships with parents and boost engagement. When parents feel invested in the school, they are more likely to stay involved. Offering events at a variety of times allowing for differing guardian schedules. The most important stakeholder in a student's education is the student. If a student is not invested in their education, there is only so much a parent can do.

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5) Finances: Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County. In what areas do you see room for improvement in its management, and how would you address these challenges?

One area for improvement in budget management is evaluating which administrative positions are essential and making thoughtful decisions about reducing roles at the central office. We need competitive pay to attract and retain high-quality employees, along with clear expectations for each role and regular performance reviews. Substitute teachers should receive fair hourly wages. Teachers provide the greatest value within a school, and funding should demonstrate this. Decreasing individual principal-level spending autonomy, while increasing district-wide standardization, could help ensure that all Hamilton County students have equal access to educational opportunities. By making strategic choices about technology—focusing only on tools that genuinely enhance students' ability to become effective citizens—we can minimize unnecessary expenses and improve overall efficiency.

6) Preventing School Violence: In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, Tennessee has strengthened school safety laws, but many parents continue to express concern in this area. What additional strategies or policy changes would you support in Hamilton County to prevent school shootings, foster community well-being, and protect the rights of students and staff?

Students and teachers should be able to expect safety in the classroom. All threats of violence should be taken seriously, whether they are written, verbal, or physical. All staff should be trained in standard safety protocols. Parents should be informed whenever protocols are enacted. School safety can be improved by allowing schools to enforce discipline effectively from the first offense. Returning to behavioral systems with clear, consistent, and tangible expectations and consequences can help students develop appropriate behavior from a young age. Consequences should be proportional to the offense and serve as a deterrent to repeated behavior while requiring parental involvement. Self-harm threats should receive mental health support facilitated by parent action to ensure the safety of all.

7) Sex Ed Instruction: How should the Hamilton County school district select and source materials for sex education? Should this instruction be provided in schools, strictly at home, or a combination of both? Which organizations, if any, do you believe should be restricted from providing materials, and what is your rationale?

I do not believe that sex education should be taught in Hamilton County schools beyond basic anatomy and physiology. Sex education should begin at home at a young age by teaching children the correct names for their body parts. As children grow, these conversations should continue in an age-appropriate way, guided by parents or guardians. Each family's perspective on healthy boundaries and sexuality is unique, making it difficult for schools to teach this subject in a way that fully respects those differences. For families who need support in this area, public health topics—such as abuse prevention, STI prevention, and healthy relationships—can be addressed by providing resources for parents to review and discuss with their children at home.

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8) Racial equity: How should the school district approach teaching racial equity, and what role, if any, should diversity, equity and inclusion play in the curriculum?

Many students already live lives filled with diversity of thought, race, and gender. We should teach civil rights history in history classes and strive to respect others on all occasions. No amount of formal DEI instruction is going to change a person's heart, but loving every student well and ensuring that each student is taught and treated with respect implicitly models the concepts that formal DEI instruction aims to promote. To formally teach DEI without living a life that respects all individuals as uniquely created for a purpose on purpose is a disservice to all students. Formal DEI instruction can sometimes create a culture of shame and stereotyping, disregarding individual uniqueness. Everyone is entitled to basic human rights.

9) Instruction of LGBTQ Issues within Schools: How should Hamilton County schools approach teaching topics related to LGBTQ issues?

LGBTQ issues should not be addressed in Hamilton County Schools. There is no nationally agreed-upon consensus on all topics related to LGBTQ issues, which means that teaching these topics runs the risk of encroaching on parental liberty and instructing individual students in ways that may be counter to their families' belief systems. School systems also lack the time and resources to adequately teach the basics and are not equipped to handle the complexity associated with LGBTQ issues. Until every student is reading and succeeding academically, there is simply no time to teach controversial social issues.

10) Gender Identity Instruction: Should Gender Ideology be taught or encouraged within the public school system? Why, or why not?

No, gender ideology should not be taught or encouraged within the public school system. Schools are under so much pressure to perform academically that we simply do not have time to teach gender ideology. Belief systems are matters of family, culture, and individual thought—not something any public system has the right or authority to teach.

11) Immigration Status: How should the school districts address enrollment concerning children of illegal immigrants? Is this a strain on our system that takes away opportunities from citizens and those with legal immigration status? Should additional documentation be required beyond the basic proof of address we have now?

School districts should require formal legal identification and proof of residency for access to services designed for citizens of that district. Acceptable forms of identification may include a birth certificate, visa, family green card, or foreign exchange student status, among others. Illegal immigrants may choose to homeschool or pursue other forms of education, but schools funded by the citizens of a community should serve only the citizens of that community. While in some cases illegal immigrants may place a strain on the system, in other cases they may not. Regardless, government-funded education is primarily designed for citizens. There are numerous educational opportunities in and around the community that do not require legal citizenship, such as public libraries and other organizations.

Independent Survey by





SANDY PRICER

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 3
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Occupation/Vocation:	CEO
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	45

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County School Board?

The County School Board's role is to set the vision, policies, and accountability for the public school system. It hires and evaluates the superintendent, approves the budget, ensures responsible use of taxpayer dollars, and makes decisions that support student success, staff effectiveness, and safe, high-quality schools. A strong board focuses on governance rather than day-to-day management, listens to the community, and works to ensure every student has access to opportunity and a quality education.

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2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a County School Board member?

My focus areas are work-based learning, school safety, teacher support, and stronger family and community partnerships. As a nonprofit leader, parent, and community advocate, I have experience building programs, managing budgets, forming partnerships, and listening well to people with different perspectives.

As a County School Board member, I would work to expand career and life-readiness opportunities, support safe and positive school environments, advocate for teachers and staff, and strengthen connections between schools, families, and community partners. I would also prioritize clear communication, responsible oversight, and student-centered decisions that help prepare every student for success in school and in life.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Laws and public policy should be guided by strong moral principles such as honesty, justice, responsibility, respect for others, and the protection of life and freedom. Those values help create a healthy, stable society. At the same time, government serves people from many different backgrounds and beliefs, so laws should be grounded in fairness, constitutional rights, and the common good rather than in one specific religious framework. The role of government is to uphold order, protect rights, and serve the public well. Good leadership requires moral clarity, integrity, and a commitment to policies that benefit the whole community.

4) Parental Rights: What is the best way to involve parents in the student's education? Who do you believe is the most important stakeholder in a student's education?

Parents are one of the most important stakeholders in a student's education because they know their child best and play a vital role in their growth, values, and long-term success. The best way to involve parents is through clear communication, genuine partnership, and meaningful opportunities for input. Families should know what their children are learning, how they are doing, and how to stay engaged. Schools should make it easy for parents to ask questions, participate in school life, and be part of important conversations. Student success is strongest when families, educators, and school leaders work together with mutual respect and shared purpose.

Independent Survey by



5) Finances: Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County. In what areas do you see room for improvement in its management, and how would you address these challenges?

With any large budget, there is always room to improve transparency, efficiency, and alignment with student needs. I would want to ensure resources are being used as effectively as possible at the school level, not just absorbed by administrative costs or systems that are not delivering results. I believe strong financial oversight includes clear reporting, measurable outcomes, and regular evaluation of spending priorities. As a School Board member, I would ask thoughtful questions, support responsible budgeting, and work to ensure investments reflect district goals such as student achievement, school safety, teacher support, and career readiness. Taxpayer dollars should be managed carefully, strategically, and with accountability to both students and the community.

6) Preventing School Violence: In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, Tennessee has strengthened school safety laws, but many parents continue to express concern in this area. What additional strategies or policy changes would you support in Hamilton County to prevent school shootings, foster community well-being, and protect the rights of students and staff?

I would support a balanced approach that focuses on prevention, preparedness, and strong school communities. That includes secure buildings, well-trained school resource officers, regular emergency planning, and clear communication between schools, families, and law enforcement. I also believe we must invest in mental health support, early intervention when students show signs of distress, and school cultures where students feel known, connected, and safe speaking up. Protecting the rights of students and staff means using fair policies, respecting due process, and making thoughtful decisions that build both safety and trust. School safety is not just about responding well in crisis, but about creating environments where problems are less likely to grow in the first place.

7) Sex Ed Instruction: How should the Hamilton County school district select and source materials for sex education? Should this instruction be provided in schools, strictly at home, or a combination of both? Which organizations, if any, do you believe should be restricted from providing materials, and what is your rationale?

Any instruction on this topic should be age-appropriate, fact-based, aligned with state law, and transparent to parents. Families should know what is being taught, be able to review materials, and have a meaningful voice in the process. I believe schools can play a role in providing clear, health-related information, while parents remain the primary guide for deeper personal, moral, and family-based conversations. That makes a combination approach the most reasonable. Materials should be selected through a careful public review process focused on educational value, medical accuracy, and age appropriateness. Organizations that provide materials inconsistent with state standards, lack transparency, or push ideology over student well-being should not be used.

Independent Survey by



8) Racial equity: How should the school district approach teaching racial equity, and what role, if any, should diversity, equity and inclusion play in the curriculum?

Schools should teach students to understand history honestly, treat others with dignity, and learn how to work with people from different backgrounds and experiences. Every student should feel respected, supported, and able to succeed. In the classroom, the focus should remain on strong academics, critical thinking, character, and preparing students to live and work in a diverse world. Diversity, equity, and inclusion should not be about politics or division, but about fostering belonging, fairness, and opportunity for all students. The goal is not to separate students by differences, but to ensure every child is seen, valued, and given the support needed to thrive.

9) Instruction of LGBTQ Issues within Schools: How should Hamilton County schools approach teaching topics related to LGBTQ issues?

Schools should approach these topics in a way that is age-appropriate, respectful, and aligned with state law and district policy. The primary focus of schools should remain on academics, student well-being, and creating safe environments for all students. Parents should be informed, have transparency into instructional materials, and remain an important part of conversations involving sensitive topics. Schools should teach students to treat one another with dignity and respect, and staff should work to ensure that every student feels physically and emotionally safe. These issues should be handled thoughtfully, without political agendas, and in a way that supports both parental involvement and a positive learning environment for every child.

10) Gender Identity Instruction: Should Gender Ideology be taught or encouraged within the public school system? Why, or why not?

Public schools should not be in the business of promoting ideology. Their role is to educate, support student well-being, and maintain a safe, respectful learning environment for every child. Sensitive topics related to identity should be handled carefully, in age-appropriate ways, and with transparency for parents. Schools should focus on academics, character, and helping students treat one another with dignity and respect. Parents should remain the primary voice in deeply personal matters involving values and identity. The goal should be to create schools where all students are safe, supported, and able to learn, without crossing the line from education into advocacy.

Independent Survey by

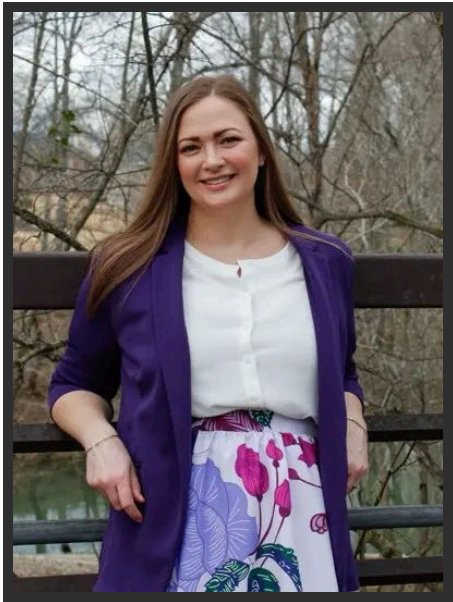


11) Immigration Status: How should the school districts address enrollment concerning children of illegal immigrants? Is this a strain on our system that takes away opportunities from citizens and those with legal immigration status? Should additional documentation be required beyond the basic proof of address we have now?

Public schools are required to serve children who live in the district, and schools should follow the law while maintaining clear, consistent enrollment procedures. The focus should be on verifying residency and ensuring that students who are enrolled actually live within the district. I support accountability, accurate records, and policies that prevent abuse of the system. At the same time, schools must remain focused on their educational mission and avoid putting staff in the position of handling federal immigration matters. If there are concerns about strain on resources, the district should address them through better planning, enrollment tracking, and advocacy for adequate state and local support.

Independent Survey by





DR. RUTH WALKER

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 3
Campaign Website:	walkerfordistrict3.com
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Occupation/Vocation:	University Professor
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	6

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County School Board?

School board members set policy, approve budgets, and hire and evaluate the superintendent. HCDE Board Policies also include promoting school-community communication, conducting self-evaluations, staying up-to-date with state legislation that impacts our schools, and voting impartially for the good of the school system. All of these responsibilities exist to ensure that every decision the board makes supports the ability of students to learn, grow, and succeed.

A national review of more than 2,800 school districts found that higher-performing boards are associated with stronger student outcomes, including higher graduation rates and improved achievement. These boards focus on clear goals, use data to monitor progress, align resources with priorities, and work collaboratively with the superintendent and community to support student success.

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2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a County School Board member?

As a mother of two public school students and a university educator with 15 years of teaching experience, I bring both a parent's perspective and professional expertise in education. I teach courses in developmental psychology, career and professional development, statistics, and research methods—all directly relevant to evaluating educational programs and student outcomes.

My research includes publications on teaching effectiveness, student success, and career readiness. I train educators across the country on evidence-based teaching practices. I also conduct community outreach and parent workshops on sexual assault prevention and child safety.

As a school board member, I will focus on data-informed decision making, supporting educators, strengthening student well-being and safety, and preparing students for success after graduation.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

The moral principle and commandment that has had the biggest impact on who I am as an educator, psychologist, and mother is, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" [John 15:12]. This commandment will also guide my work on the school board.

Board members are required to follow a code of ethics that emphasizes integrity, transparency, and avoiding conflicts of interest in decision making. For me, these align well with faith-informed moral values such as honesty, justice, responsibility, respect, and caring for others. Additionally, school board members are sworn to uphold the Constitution and the laws of Tennessee.

4) Parental Rights: What is the best way to involve parents in the student's education? Who do you believe is the most important stakeholder in a student's education?

Students do best when families and schools work together. More than 100 studies conducted over the past two decades report that more parental involvement is associated with better student academic achievement and school engagement. Research also shows that when parents communicate expectations about education and stay engaged with their child's learning, students have higher academic motivation, achievement, and emotional well-being.

According to the experts, the best way to involve parents is through clear communication, accessible school events, and opportunities for families to participate in learning both at home and at school. Parents are the most important and enduring influence in a child's life and should always be treated as partners and respected in educational decisions.

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5) Finances: Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County. In what areas do you see room for improvement in its management, and how would you address these challenges?

According to the 2025 Chamber of Commerce, Hamilton County Schools is the second largest employer in the county, employing 6,116 people (more than Volkswagen). HCS operates with a budget of roughly \$692 million, with the largest share supporting the salaries of teachers and staff who work directly with students. Unfortunately, recent analyses show that many teachers are earning less this year than last year, even as the cost of living has increased.

The current board and superintendent have worked to make responsible decisions, but rising costs and limited revenue have created challenges and budget deficits. Moving forward, I support transparent budgeting, prioritizing classroom resources, and advocating for funding from our County Commission to help recruit and retain excellent educators.

6) Preventing School Violence: In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, Tennessee has strengthened school safety laws, but many parents continue to express concern in this area. What additional strategies or policy changes would you support in Hamilton County to prevent school shootings, foster community well-being, and protect the rights of students and staff?

I experienced an active shooter hoax at UTC last fall. One of the things I appreciated about UTC's response was the training faculty and staff received afterwards. HCS policy currently requires drills, including one annual intruder drill and CPR/AED training, but does not require the hands-on bleeding control or active threat response training that saved lives at The Covenant School.

Research shows preparedness varies widely and schools often overestimate readiness without concrete training, equipment, and coordination. I will advocate for expanding our policy to include active threat response training, Stop the Bleed training, and accessible trauma kits in every school. Prevention must also include threat assessment teams and strong mental health supports, which have been shown to reduce risk.

7) Sex Ed Instruction: How should the Hamilton County school district select and source materials for sex education? Should this instruction be provided in schools, strictly at home, or a combination of both? Which organizations, if any, do you believe should be restricted from providing materials, and what is your rationale?

Sex education should be a partnership between schools and families. Given Tennessee's public health data, this matters. Tennessee ranks among the top 10 for teen birth rates; Hamilton County has an average of 19.5 births per 1,000 compared to 16.7 nationally. Our teens also face elevated risks for STIs. Research shows that programs including contraception education are associated with higher contraceptive use and (importantly) lower rates of sexual activity among youth. At the same time, approximately 59% of parents support teaching effective contraception in schools.

School boards must ensure instruction follows Tennessee law and uses materials that are age-appropriate, medically accurate, and evidence-based. When evaluating partners, my focus would be on accuracy and effectiveness, not politics.

Independent Survey by



8) Racial equity: How should the school district approach teaching racial equity, and what role, if any, should diversity, equity and inclusion play in the curriculum?

Our schools should teach accurate history and help students understand the diverse society in which they live. Tennessee law allows schools to teach about historical racism and discrimination when presented objectively. Researchers have found these topics already arise in classrooms. A national survey of 2,531 public school teachers by the Pew Research Center found that 56% report discussions about racism or racial inequality come up in class. At the same time, about 4 in 10 teachers say debates about what schools should teach have negatively affected their ability to do their job.

Local school boards should focus on ensuring instruction follows state standards, is age-appropriate, and is transparent to parents, while keeping schools focused on student learning.

9) Instruction of LGBTQ Issues within Schools: How should Hamilton County schools approach teaching topics related to LGBTQ issues?

Part of running for this position means understanding the boundaries of this role and the reach of our school board. Curriculum decisions regarding specific topics are largely determined through state standards and federal law, rather than local school boards. At the local level, our responsibility is to ensure schools follow the law, communicate clearly with parents, and maintain safe learning environments. In Tennessee, state law requires parent notification and consent before instruction specifically about sexual orientation or gender identity.

Regardless of policy debates, schools must ensure every student is treated with dignity and protected from bullying or harassment so they can focus on learning.

10) Gender Identity Instruction: Should Gender Ideology be taught or encouraged within the public school system? Why, or why not?

This is a question where people often have strong and differing perspectives. Public schools are not tasked with promoting specific beliefs; they are required to follow state standards and focus on student learning and well-being. As noted in my previous response, Tennessee law already sets parameters around instruction related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

The role of a local school board is to ensure policies are implemented appropriately, parents are informed, and classrooms remain focused on academics.

Regardless of differing views, every student should be treated with dignity and be able to learn in a safe environment. My goal is to listen to and represent all voices in our community within the scope of this role.

Independent Survey by



11) Immigration Status: How should the school districts address enrollment concerning children of illegal immigrants? Is this a strain on our system that takes away opportunities from citizens and those with legal immigration status? Should additional documentation be required beyond the basic proof of address we have now?

Public schools are required under federal law (e.g., Plyler v. Doe) to provide free education to all children regardless of immigration status. Local school boards must follow that law. Recent Tennessee legislation (HB 793/SB 836) would require schools to collect and report students' immigration status.

No child is currently being turned away from our schools. Under TISA, funding is allocated on a per-student basis, meaning each student enrolled brings resources to support their education.

I respect the expertise of the Hamilton County Principals Association and share their concern that the full implications of this legislation have not been fully considered. These requirements would add administrative burden, shift resources away from classrooms, and risk undermining trust with families.

Independent Survey by

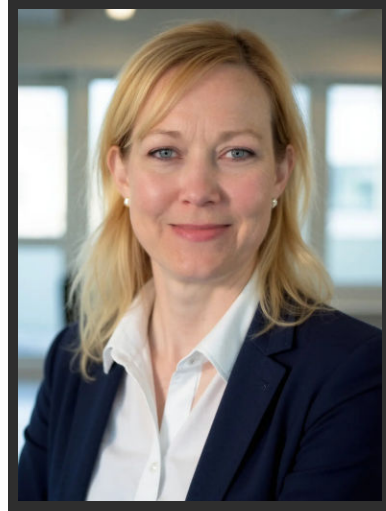


County School Board Dist. 6 Candidates

(in alphabetical order)

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

Ben Connor



Cindy Fain

Independent Survey by



**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

BEN CONNOR

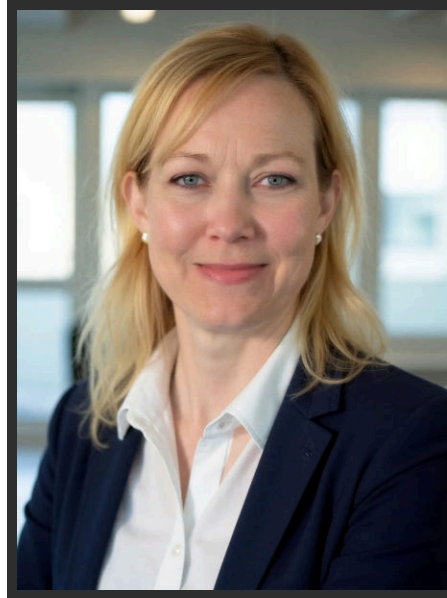
We made multiple attempts to communicate with Ben Connor; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

Dist.: Dist. 6

Independent Survey by





CINDY FAIN

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 6
Campaign Website:	votecindyfain.com
Email Address:	electcindyf@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Small business owner & Parent
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	16 years

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County School Board?

The board's purpose is to hire and hold accountable one person, the Director of Schools (Superintendent). They ensure the schools reflect the specific needs and values of the tax paying community. Board members are the fiduciary stewards and approve the multi-million dollar budget ensuring every dollar is tied to student achievement. The board draft and adopt policies that the Superintendent and staff must follow. I view the School Board as the direct link between our families and the government. Its purpose is not to co-parent our children, but to provide the professional and moral infrastructure that graduates students as independent thinkers who have the character and skills to thrive in the real world.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a County School Board member?

As a parent and business owner, I understand that accountability is the cornerstone of any successful organization. My focus is Radical Fiscal and Curriculum Transparency. Fiscal transparency means scrutinizing the district budget like a private business—ensuring every TISA (Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement) dollar directly impacts student outcomes rather than administrative overhead. Curriculum transparency ensures parents are empowered partners with frictionless access to all classroom materials. My expertise lies in replacing bureaucratic ambiguity with clarity and trust, ensuring our schools prioritize the families they serve and the taxpayers who fund them.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

As a conservative parent of two daughters and a business owner, I believe our laws and schools must reflect the foundational moral principles that built our nation. Values like honesty, integrity, and respect—the core of the Ten Commandments—are not just religious; they are the bedrock of a stable society and a successful business. My commitment is to Fiscal and Curriculum Transparency. I will ensure your tax dollars are managed with business-like accountability and that parents have access to all classroom materials. I believe the school's role is to reinforce the traditional values we teach at home, not replace them. I am running to protect parental rights and return common-sense accountability to our board.

4) Parental Rights: What is the best way to involve parents in the student's education? Who do you believe is the most important stakeholder in a student's education?

The best way to involve parents is through Radical Transparency. Parents shouldn't have to "hunt" for what their children are learning; I advocate for frictionless access to all lesson plans and reading lists. When parents know the "what," they can finally support the "how" at home. The Parent is the most important stakeholder. While teachers and boards serve for a season, parents are the constant, holding the ultimate moral and legal responsibility for their child's future. However, transparency requires mutual accountability. We must hold the system accountable for what it teaches, but we must also hold students and parents accountable for their actions and engagement. True success happens when the school provides the tools and the family provides the standard.

Independent Survey by



5) Finances: Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County. In what areas do you see room for improvement in its management, and how would you address these challenges?

Education is Hamilton County's largest budget item, yet it remains "top-heavy" while starting teacher salaries (roughly \$40,000–\$44,000) lag significantly below the national average. I will implement a "Classroom First" mandate, requiring 65-70% of all new revenue to fund teacher salaries and supplies before any new administrative roles are created. Additionally, inflationary pressures have turned deferred maintenance into a "money pit." Instead of simply asking for more taxpayer money, I would call for a Third-Party Efficiency Audit to find savings in procurement and vendor contracts. Through Radical Fiscal Transparency, I will ensure TISA funds directly impact student outcomes, prioritizing our children's proficiency over bureaucratic growth.

6) Preventing School Violence: In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, Tennessee has strengthened school safety laws, but many parents continue to express concern in this area. What additional strategies or policy changes would you support in Hamilton County to prevent school shootings, foster community well-being, and protect the rights of students and staff?

In Hamilton County, parents are no longer satisfied with "compliance"; they want visible, proactive protection. I fully support the 2024 state law allowing for highly trained, transitioned SROs or vetted staff members to be armed, provided they undergo rigorous, ongoing tactical and psychological training. No school should ever be a "gun-free zone" that leaves children defenseless. Fostering community well-being requires trust, which is broken when security measures infringe on student privacy or staff rights. I would propose that each school has a dedicated Safety Liaison whose only job is to communicate safety protocols to parents. Parents should not be left in the dark, they should be partners in the safety plan.

7) Sex Ed Instruction: How should the Hamilton County school district select and source materials for sex education? Should this instruction be provided in schools, strictly at home, or a combination of both? Which organizations, if any, do you believe should be restricted from providing materials, and what is your rationale?

Hamilton County should source materials through Radical Transparency, ensuring all curriculum is vetted by the Board and fully accessible to parents online. I believe sex education is primarily a sensitive, moral conversation that belongs at home. While schools can provide basic, medically accurate biological instruction, it must remain an "opt-in" model, respecting the Parent as the most important stakeholder. I believe organizations with political or ideological agendas, should be restricted from providing materials or instruction. The rationale is simple: public schools must focus on objective academics, not social engineering. By removing outside activists and providing transparency, we hold the system accountable and empower parents to remain the constant authority in their children's lives.

Independent Survey by



8) Racial equity: How should the school district approach teaching racial equity, and what role, if any, should diversity, equity and inclusion play in the curriculum?

In Hamilton County, my approach is Equality of Opportunity, not Equity of Outcome. As a parent with a bi-racial daughter, I flatly refuse any curriculum that suggests she should be held to a lower standard or viewed through the lens of victimhood. Our schools must focus on Merit-Based Excellence, teaching the full, honest history of our nation without assigning collective guilt or "divisive concepts" prohibited by Tennessee law. Through Radical Transparency, I will ensure parents have digital access to all materials to verify that we are graduating independent thinkers judged by the content of their character. DEI frameworks that prioritize group identity over individual accountability have no place in our classrooms; we must demand the highest standards for every student.

9) Instruction of LGBTQ Issues within Schools: How should Hamilton County schools approach teaching topics related to LGBTQ issues?

Hamilton County Schools should be advocating for classroom time to be spent on core academic subjects—math, reading, and science—while leaving sensitive social and sexual topics to the home. There should be privacy and safety for all students. I support the maintenance of sex-segregated private spaces (bathrooms, locker rooms, and overnight field trip accommodations) based on biological sex to ensure the comfort and security of the student body. Tennessee law (SB 1810 / HB 2169) now mandates a high level of transparency regarding a student's gender identity. The school should never withhold information about a child's mental or emotional well-being from their parents.

10) Gender Identity Instruction: Should Gender Ideology be taught or encouraged within the public school system? Why, or why not?

There are several reasons I oppose teaching gender ideology in the curriculum. First, I believe that questions of identity, morality, and sexuality are the sole domain of the family. When schools "encourage" specific gender ideologies, they are overstepping their role and effectively "co-parenting" with the government. Second, many families hold deeply religious or traditional views on biology. Introducing gender ideology as "settled fact" creates a hostile environment for students who hold differing beliefs, violating the school's duty to remain ideologically neutral. Schools are not clinical environments. Encouraging children to question their biological sex without full parental involvement is a liability for the school and a risk to the child's long-term well-being.

Independent Survey by



11) Immigration Status: How should the school districts address enrollment concerning children of illegal immigrants? Is this a strain on our system that takes away opportunities from citizens and those with legal immigration status? Should additional documentation be required beyond the basic proof of address we have now?

The school districts must prioritize the citizens and legal residents it is primarily tasked to serve. Increasing enrollment of children with illegal status creates a significant strain on teachers, who are often forced to manage overcrowded classrooms and high-needs language barriers without additional support. This diversion of resources inevitably takes away opportunities from our legal students. While federal law currently limits documentation requirements, I believe we must explore every legal avenue to verify residency and status. We owe it to our families to ensure that taxpayer-funded resources are not being stretched thin at the expense of our own children's education.

Independent Survey by



County School Board Dist. 8 Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



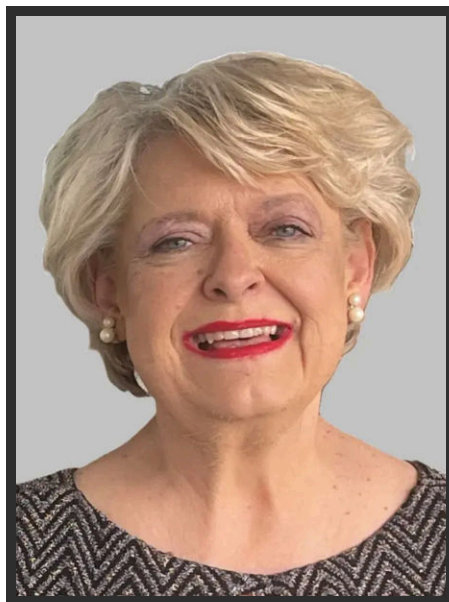
Sabrina Daniel



Katie Perkins

Independent Survey by





SABRINA DANIEL

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 8
Campaign Website:	sabrinadaniel.com
Email Address:	sabrinadaniel657@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	teacher
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	15 years. raised in and went to East Ridge schools. current residence 2 years.

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County School Board?

The purpose of the school board is governance. They have 3 primary responsibilities: Hire and evaluate the performance of the Superintendent, set the budget to be presented to the Hamilton School Board for approval, and set policy. all 3 of these require a majority vote of 6 members. I believe the role should be to equip students with the knowledge to THRIVE in life. The primary focus is academics. However, students must possess qualities beyond academics: problem-solving, effective communication, cultural inclusivity, and resiliency.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a County School Board member?

My expertise is education. I have taught for 17 years locally every grade prek4-5th. I have a Masters and a specialist in School Administration. My platform includes: enhanced character education, classroom management, reading literacy, safe schools, examining mental health choices, and parental/guardian involvement.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Yes. Everyone can agree these commandments make life work, whether they are believers in Jewish or Christian faiths. Not all, but Most of Founding fathers looked to Scriptures when forming key documents. Most of parents/guardians would want their students to have exposure to The Ten Commandments. No one makes another human being believe anything. Historical facts should be taught: nation was founded because people wanted to worship God freely and the Founding Fathers relied on Scripture to guide important documents---Declaration, Constitution. Our students need to be taught the truth about History and the Ten Commandments are a part of that. FYI: Tennessee state law says that public school classrooms may hang The Ten Commandments, Declaration, and Constitution on their walls.

4) Parental Rights: What is the best way to involve parents in the student's education? Who do you believe is the most important stakeholder in a student's education?

Communication. Parent/teacher conferences. Short notes of information to parents via backpacks, parents who will volunteer, and general availability when parents have questions/issues they need to discuss. Depending on the parent, you might want another colleague to join the conversation. Kind truth spoken in love is the key to good parental relationships. The saying, "no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care." It is really, really true. In terms of stakeholders, the student is the first stakeholder followed by the parents/guardians, then teacher, and all of the community. We need an educated citizenry for America to thrive.

5) Finances: Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County. In what areas do you see room for improvement in its management, and how would you address these challenges?

Our education budget is \$600,000,000 in Hamilton County Schools. That is a lot of money to steward for the tax-payers. I believe in examining our current budget for unneeded positions and programs. "The unexamined life is not worth living." The unexamined budget leads to positions that we do not need and programs that we don't know whether they are working or not. I would look carefully at the number of Central Office personnel. Are they all necessary? Students and teachers first. I choose to live within my means and I believe our school system should, too. We steward a reasonable budget and are mindful of the needs of tax-payers.

Independent Survey by



6) Preventing School Violence: In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, Tennessee has strengthened school safety laws, but many parents continue to express concern in this area. What additional strategies or policy changes would you support in Hamilton County to prevent school shootings, foster community well-being, and protect the rights of students and staff?

Metal detectors are being tested at Soddy Daisy. Seem to be working. I would check cost and if reasonable, have a one way door into the school through a metal detector. police or resource officer packing and available to escort to the office when the metal detector goes off. Examine the item that set off the alarm and follow protocol, hopefully to taken to juvenile. All doors locked from the inside. Never ever have an outside door propped open. Safety drills regularly with students. Code color announced over the intercom when intruder or shooter is in building. Teachers follow established protocol.

7) Sex Ed Instruction: How should the Hamilton County school district select and source materials for sex education? Should this instruction be provided in schools, strictly at home, or a combination of both? Which organizations, if any, do you believe should be restricted from providing materials, and what is your rationale?

Traditional values regarding sex education. It should be a combination. Primarily parental responsibility. but since this doesn't always happen, our school system should teach the basics. No indoctrination of LGBTQ life choices.

8) Racial equity: How should the school district approach teaching racial equity, and what role, if any, should diversity, equity and inclusion play in the curriculum?

All people are equal and should be treated as such. We acknowledge that we are diverse with strength and weaknesses, treated equally, and include everything in the process.

9) Instruction of LGBTQ Issues within Schools: How should Hamilton County schools approach teaching topics related to LGBTQ issues?

They should not teach on these topics.

10) Gender Identity Instruction: Should Gender Ideology be taught or encouraged within the public school system? Why, or why not?

No. This is totally out of our lane of teaching academics.

Independent Survey by



11) Immigration Status: How should the school districts address enrollment concerning children of illegal immigrants? Is this a strain on our system that takes away opportunities from citizens and those with legal immigration status? Should additional documentation be required beyond the basic proof of address we have now?

Require same info as everyone. Does take away from our children. Many don't speak English.

Independent Survey by





KATIE PERKINS

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 8
Campaign Website:	KatiePerkinsforSchoolBoard.com
Email Address:	Katie.Perkins@epbf.com
Occupation/Vocation:	college professor/substitute teacher
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	I've lived 14 years in East Ridge as an adult. I grew up in East Brainerd and attended UTC.

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County School Board?

A county school board serves as the elected governing authority for local public education, with the responsibility of establishing the vision, policies, and budget aimed at enhancing student performance. Their key functions include hiring and evaluating the superintendent, approving curricula and textbooks, and ensuring that the operations of schools resonate with the values of the community. It is a role of servitude for the people in your district.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a County School Board member?

I have been a substitute teacher in Hamilton County for over twenty years. I currently work as a college professor and a substitute teacher. I have been a community volunteer in district 8 for over fifteen years. I coach many sports teams at East Ridge Parks and Rec. and currently serve on the East Ridge Library Board.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

The First Amendment decrees that the separation of church and state is a fundamental constitutional principle. All people should have moral values but also freedom of religion. This freedom allows for comfort, understanding, and inclusion. The separation of church and education is widely considered crucial for ensuring that schools focus on academic education while respecting the diversity of religious beliefs and freedom to practice them.

4) Parental Rights: What is the best way to involve parents in the student's education? Who do you believe is the most important stakeholder in a student's education?

A parent is the most important stakeholder in a student's education. It is a blessing that Hamilton County schools have magnet schools, charter schools and school choice. These schools require that all parents complete a certain number of volunteer hours each year.

5) Finances: Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County. In what areas do you see room for improvement in its management, and how would you address these challenges?

Our teachers are the first priority. I will make sure that they have the resources they need at every given opportunity.

6) Preventing School Violence: In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, Tennessee has strengthened school safety laws, but many parents continue to express concern in this area. What additional strategies or policy changes would you support in Hamilton County to prevent school shootings, foster community well-being, and protect the rights of students and staff?

Not only do we have to have safe schools but both parents and students have to feel that school is a safe place. Part of this safety and feeling of safety comes from parental involvement. To make kids feel safe at school we must, foster authentic, trusting relationships between staff, students, and parents, and maintain a predictable, supportive environment. This could be by greeting students by name, enforcing consistent, respectful behavior rules, and proactively addressing bullying with open dialogue. Another idea is proactive discipline. Focus on positive behavioral reinforcement and restorative justice rather than just punishment.

Independent Survey by



7) Sex Ed Instruction: How should the Hamilton County school district select and source materials for sex education? Should this instruction be provided in schools, strictly at home, or a combination of both? Which organizations, if any, do you believe should be restricted from providing materials, and what is your rationale?

All organizations in the schools must have parental consent before a student can participate. This includes clubs and other forms of counseling. Transparent communication between teachers and parents is how this topic should be handled.

8) Racial equity: How should the school district approach teaching racial equity, and what role, if any, should diversity, equity and inclusion play in the curriculum?

I appreciate the paideia philosophy that CSAS and CSLA have been using for many years. This type of learning is a holistic, classical Greek philosophy of education aimed at shaping the whole person—mind, body, and character—to create well-rounded citizens. It focuses on rigorous, liberal arts education for all students, fostering critical thinking, lifelong learning, and active civic participation through a three-columned approach: didactic instruction, coaching, and Socratic seminars. With this philosophy students are able to discuss among themselves roles topics like racial equity. This is important because students discuss with their peers, who may be of different race, about their understanding of these topics and about life experiences.

9) Instruction of LGBTQ Issues within Schools: How should Hamilton County schools approach teaching topics related to LGBTQ issues?

Public schools are inclusive environments. These environments represent real life, outside of school. Again, the paideia philosophy would be a good way to handle this. Students from different backgrounds, who have different life experiences should have discussions with open minds and open hearts and listen to one another. Compassion and tolerance are the highest forms of education.

10) Gender Identity Instruction: Should Gender Ideology be taught or encouraged within the public school system? Why, or why not?

According to Google, "Gender ideology is a term primarily used by critics, notably within the Catholic Church and conservative movements, to describe and oppose the concept that gender is a social construct rather than a fixed biological binary. Proponents of this view argue it undermines traditional, complementary gender roles and threatens natural law."

Independent Survey by



11) Immigration Status: How should the school districts address enrollment concerning children of illegal immigrants? Is this a strain on our system that takes away opportunities from citizens and those with legal immigration status? Should additional documentation be required beyond the basic proof of address we have now?

We live in a country where education for all children is a given right. This should not be challenged. The 14th Amendment protects undocumented children, who are entitled to protection regardless of their status. In 1982 the Supreme Court made a decision holding that states cannot constitutionally deny students a free public K-12 education based on their immigration status. This is not a strain on our system. This is the law. Education is essential for maintaining a democratic society and denying it creates a permanent underclass.

Independent Survey by



County School Board Dist. 9 Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Jordan Hammond



Gary Kuehn

Independent Survey by





JORDAN HAMMOND

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 9
Campaign Website:	JordanHammond.com
Email Address:	JordanHammondD9@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Engineer
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	5 years

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County School Board?

I see the role of the school board as setting direction and making sure our schools are delivering results.

The board shouldn't manage day-to-day operations—that's the superintendent's job. Our responsibility is to set clear expectations, manage the budget responsibly, and hold the system accountable for student outcomes. That means focusing on academic performance, making sure resources reach the classroom, and being honest with families about what's working and what isn't.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a County School Board member?

One of my biggest influences was a teacher who saw potential in me when I didn't see it in myself. She pushed me, mentored me, and stayed invested in my success, and that's a big part of why I'm here today. That experience drives me to give back and be that same kind of support for students in this community.

As an engineer, I'm trained to look at data and understand what's actually working, not just what sounds good. That's important when it comes to improving academic outcomes.

I also bring a younger perspective. I'm closer to students' experiences today, and I believe that helps me connect, listen, and make decisions that better prepare them for what comes next.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Many of the values behind the Ten Commandments—honesty, personal responsibility, and respect for others—already guide our laws and communities. But they shouldn't be the only code our laws follow. Trying to enforce every moral principle through government would be overreach and take power away from families and communities.

Government's role is to protect freedom, keep order, and let families raise responsible, moral kids.

As a school board member, I'll focus on teaching strong values, accountability, and integrity in our schools—without turning classrooms or local government into a place where morality is enforced by fines or penalties.

4) Parental Rights: What is the best way to involve parents in the student's education? Who do you believe is the most important stakeholder in a student's education?

The most important stakeholder in the education process is the student, but parents are their closest partners. Schools should work with families like neighbors in a small community: parents and teachers communicating closely, sharing information, and staying on the same page about each child's progress.

Parents should know how their child is doing every day, and schools should listen to their insights and concerns.

The best way to involve parents is through transparency, regular updates, and a seat at the table when decisions are made. When schools and families work together like this, students get the support and guidance they need to succeed both academically and personally.

Independent Survey by



5) Finances: Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County. In what areas do you see room for improvement in its management, and how would you address these challenges?

Education is the largest part of Hamilton County's budget, so every taxpayer dollar should go to students—not bureaucracy. Too often, money gets tied up in programs or administration that don't improve outcomes.

I would make sure resources are focused on the classroom, supporting teachers, and giving students the tools they need to succeed in reading, math, and career readiness—align community priorities to work towards supporting the system beyond the finances. That means tracking results, asking tough questions about spending, and eliminating waste. Families should know exactly how their tax dollars are being used and see real results in their schools.

Strong schools require smart spending, accountability, and putting students first—that's how we honor both families and taxpayers.

6) Preventing School Violence: In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, Tennessee has strengthened school safety laws, but many parents continue to express concern in this area. What additional strategies or policy changes would you support in Hamilton County to prevent school shootings, foster community well-being, and protect the rights of students and staff?

A tragedy like the Covenant School shooting is a reminder that school safety is a top priority. It requires a preventative approach that addresses both immediate threats and underlying causes.

In Hamilton County, I support strong security measures, clear emergency plans, and giving schools the resources they need to respond quickly in a crisis.

We also need mental health support. Strong community is necessary in our schools—we need to encourage more interpersonal connections. We need to foster an environment that focuses on support, understanding, and respect.

Parents, teachers, and administrators should all have a voice in safety planning. The goal is safe, structured schools where students can learn, staff feel supported, and families have confidence their children are protected.

Independent Survey by



7) Sex Ed Instruction: How should the Hamilton County school district select and source materials for sex education? Should this instruction be provided in schools, strictly at home, or a combination of both? Which organizations, if any, do you believe should be restricted from providing materials, and what is your rationale?

While research shows that comprehensive, age-appropriate, sex education results in many benefits, families know their children best, and schools should support—not replace—parents in guiding kids.

A student's education should not be limited to school. A parent has the right to teach their child about these topics, but not all children have the opportunity to be taught at home.

The goal is simple: schools should reinforce respect, safety, and strong moral guidance, while parents retain their voice on these topics. When families and schools work together, children are better prepared to make wise choices and grow up with confidence and character.

8) Racial equity: How should the school district approach teaching racial equity, and what role, if any, should diversity, equity and inclusion play in the curriculum?

I don't believe schools need a separate curriculum to "teach racial equity." Students are smart, and following honest, accurate history lessons will naturally help them understand our country and the experiences of different communities.

The focus should remain on teaching history, character, and personal responsibility, not promoting ideology. Lessons should encourage respect and empathy while keeping the classroom focused on academics and preparing students for the real world.

Parents should have a voice in what their children are learning, and schools should ensure lessons bring students together rather than divide them. The goal is simple: students learn, grow in understanding, and leave school ready to succeed.

9) Instruction of LGBTQ Issues within Schools: How should Hamilton County schools approach teaching topics related to LGBTQ issues?

I don't believe LGBTQ issues should be treated as a separate curriculum topic in our schools. Age-appropriate course material in history and science classes mention these ideas without bias.

Schools should focus on academics, character, and respect for others, teaching students how to get along, be responsible, and succeed in the real world. Teachers should create a safe, inclusive environment for all students without promoting specific ideologies.

Parents should have a clear voice in what their children are exposed to, and schools should remain neutral on topics that fall outside core academics, leaving guidance on personal or moral issues to families.

Independent Survey by



10) Gender Identity Instruction: Should Gender Ideology be taught or encouraged within the public school system? Why, or why not?

I don't believe gender ideology should be taught in our public schools. It doesn't fit into any course content for K-12 students. But the topic of gender on its own is one that comes up in history, science, and social studies.

Classrooms should focus on academics, critical thinking, and preparing students for the real world, not on promoting particular ideologies. Teachers should create a safe and respectful environment for all students, regardless of personal topics, like gender identity, which shouldn't be imposed on others.

The goal is simple: schools should stick to their mission—teaching core subjects well—and let parents guide children on personal and moral matters.

11) Immigration Status: How should the school districts address enrollment concerning children of illegal immigrants? Is this a strain on our system that takes away opportunities from citizens and those with legal immigration status? Should additional documentation be required beyond the basic proof of address we have now?

Hamilton County schools should follow the law. According to Plyler v. Doe (1982), children of undocumented immigrants cannot be denied a public education. The role of schools is to meet student needs, not enforce immigration law.

Undocumented students are no more a “strain” on the system than any other student. Schools exist to educate children, not judge their families. Requiring proof of address makes sense for zoning, but not for denying access to education—every child deserves the opportunity to learn.

The focus should remain on providing a quality education for all students in our district, ensuring classrooms are safe, structured, and focused on academics, regardless of immigration status.

Independent Survey by





GARY KUEHN

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 9
Campaign Website:	Garykuehnforschoolboard.com
Email Address:	garykuehnd9@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Retired
Military Background:	two sons that participated, Marines and Army
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	49 years Hamilton Co.

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County School Board?

By description, the county school board person represents their district stakeholders in creating and revising educational policy as the educational environment changes.

They also are tasked with budget oversight making sure dollars are used effectively for student learning and appropriate district operations.

Thirdly, hiring, evaluating, and working with the director of schools regarding operations.

However, it is much more than these three things if done correctly. It is about being a community liason between schools and the public if needed, helping provide equity and compliance with policy and law. It is also a position of service, to the school administrators, teachers, and especially students.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a County School Board member?

Currently as chairman of the Facility Committee for the past two years, I have worked diligently with the operations and maintenance departments of the school system to provide \$60 million dollars of renovations and repairs to all of our schools in the system. I would continue to work on this challenge faced by the MGT report/action plan provided to the school system and county government.

I would also work with the CTE and Future Ready department to add more opportunities not only for our district 9 students but all students in the system for more post-graduate options for their future.

Lastly, I am working with other board members to reduce testing time and allowing more teaching time.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

I do believe currently that many of our government laws were inspired by the Ten Commandments. As a Christian, I try to follow this moral code. As a member of society, I value not only my religious liberty but preserving those of others. I believe in the right to pray in school but that freedom goes out to all regardless of religion. I believe we should teach and expect morality including honesty, respectfulness, and "The Golden Rule" to name a few. I believe it is important for our governing body to continue with democracy and maintain moral liberties and guidance for all.

4) Parental Rights: What is the best way to involve parents in the student's education? Who do you believe is the most important stakeholder in a student's education?

The best way to involve parents in the student's education is to let them help their students make more choices.

We should be creating more and better communication between schools and parents, especially at early ages. Sending home via paper or electronically, clear information of programs, speakers, and especially messages that they will share is important. Give parents the opt in choice rather than the opt out choice. Allow more visitation into schools. Share more about why they are learning something as much as what they are learning.

Both home and school shape the child so the importance of partnership between parents and schools/teachers must be given more time together through teacher selection and school planning.

Independent Survey by



5) Finances: Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County. In what areas do you see room for improvement in its management, and how would you address these challenges?

Our budget, last year involved a large cut in many areas of the Budget. As we approach the new budget season we are already looking at where there might be room to reduce dollars so that those dollars can be added in other needed areas. We have found that allowing administrators at each school to have more autonomy in their budget of running their school can save overall millions of dollars. Individual school staff infrastructure decisions can make a huge impact in savings.

The need to close facilities or combine facilities is an option that we will need to look at also to save big dollars.

Finally, the cut in some technology in early years will save dollars.

6) Preventing School Violence: In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, Tennessee has strengthened school safety laws, but many parents continue to express concern in this area. What additional strategies or policy changes would you support in Hamilton County to prevent school shootings, foster community well-being, and protect the rights of students and staff?

The addition of SRD's or SSO's in all of our schools has been hugely impactful, but the need for a SRD AND a SRO is a need in all secondary schools due to the restrictions placed on the different type of security officer in daily events.

Improved software, not cameras, can help make our schools safer.

Also better more current equipment such as those used in athletic and entertainment events can also help. There are federal and private grants available for both equipment and software for systems.

Improved lighting in all areas including parking lots and other facilities will help.

7) Sex Ed Instruction: How should the Hamilton County school district select and source materials for sex education? Should this instruction be provided in schools, strictly at home, or a combination of both? Which organizations, if any, do you believe should be restricted from providing materials, and what is your rationale?

Sex education in schools is a topic that needs to be continued because of the importance it plays on reducing and preventing sexually transmitted diseases, lowering sexual violence, and adolescent pregnancy. It is a topic that should be covered both at home and in school, but if a parent feels uncomfortable about having their child participate or do not feel their child is ready then they do not have to participate.

With regards to selection and sources of materials to be used, a selection committee of health services, teachers, and parents should review and select for the various age groups in our system. Improved and updated curriculum and training is a need for our state curriculum.

Independent Survey by



8) Racial equity: How should the school district approach teaching racial equity, and what role, if any, should diversity, equity and inclusion play in the curriculum?

The district should continue the approach they have taken with regards to racial equity. The curriculum of a course should include different and multiple perspectives. It should include various areas of oppression, achievements, and acceptances by all multiple cultures. It should not reopen division of culture that was created years and years ago to point blame at any other race, culture, or religion. This curriculum should be left in college level institutes where it is optional to take and those taking it have a more developed understanding of society.

9) Instruction of LGBTQ Issues within Schools: How should Hamilton County schools approach teaching topics related to LGBTQ issues?

NO, this is a topic that should not be taught in school but discussed in the home. However, I believe all individuals should be treated with respect.

10) Gender Identity Instruction: Should Gender Ideology be taught or encouraged within the public school system? Why, or why not?

NO, this is a topic that should not be taught at school but should be discussed in the home. However, I believe all individuals should be treated with respect.

11) Immigration Status: How should the school districts address enrollment concerning children of illegal immigrants? Is this a strain on our system that takes away opportunities from citizens and those with legal immigration status? Should additional documentation be required beyond the basic proof of address we have now?

The addition of non-English speaking immigrant students has put a strain on our education system due to the need of many more ENL (English New Language) than previous. However, these ENL students are not all illegal immigrants. Many have entered legally and must be educated. Currently the amount of dollars to determine illegal vs legal immigration in our system is greatly higher than just educating all that enter our schools. If we can identify those that are not legally in our country, we should, but the benefits of educating all is greater than not with regards to our juvenile system, and SNAP.

Yes, more proof is needed to enter our schools but once in, we educate them.

Independent Survey by



County School Board Uncontested Candidates

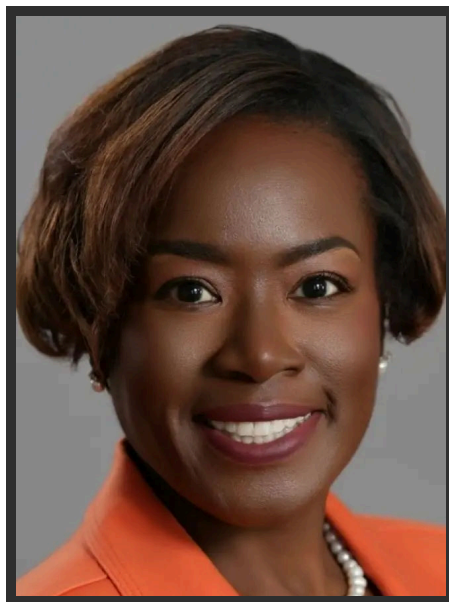
(in alphabetical order)



Thessela White (Dist. 5)

Independent Survey by





THESELA WHITE

Candidate Information

Dist.:	Dist. 5
Campaign Website:	thesselawhite.com
Email Address:	friendstoelectthesselawhite@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Logistics
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	Chattanooga native for 50 years. Lived in Memphis to complete my degree.

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County School Board?

The purpose of the County School Board is to provide strong, accountable leadership for our public schools. The board oversees district operations, sets educational policies, and ensures that our schools comply with state and federal laws. This includes making decisions about budgets, curricula, and personnel so that our schools remain focused on student success. As a governing body, the board establishes district-wide goals, approves policies, and monitors progress toward those goals. One of its most important responsibilities is hiring and evaluating the superintendent, who manages the day-to-day operations of the district. Ultimately, the school board serves as the direct link between the community and its schools, ensuring that decisions reflect the values and priorities of the families we serve.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as a County School Board member?

My primary area of expertise is building strong collaborations with organizations and programs dedicated to mentoring our youth. I have spent more than 20 years volunteering as a mentor, and that experience has shown me how powerful community partnerships can be in supporting students' growth and confidence.

As a County School Board member, I would continue strengthening these partnerships by working closely with schools, families, and community groups to expand mentoring opportunities and positive youth-development programs. My goal is to help ensure that every student has access to the guidance, encouragement, and support they need to thrive both inside and outside the classroom.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

I believe the heart of the Ten Commandments is love. When we genuinely value God, family, and community, the laws, ordinances, and regulations we create naturally reflect principles such as respect, honesty, responsibility, and care for one another. In that sense, a commitment to love guides us toward policies that uplift and protect the people we serve.

4) Parental Rights: What is the best way to involve parents in the student's education? Who do you believe is the most important stakeholder in a student's education?

Parental participation is one of the strongest factors influencing student success. When parents are engaged, students show greater resilience, improved behavior, and stronger academic outcomes. Partnerships between schools and families also boost attendance, motivation, and long-term persistence.

The best way to involve parents is through clear communication, welcoming school environments, and meaningful opportunities for families to take part in their child's learning. Students are the most important stakeholders in their education, and when schools and families work together, students thrive.

Independent Survey by



5) Finances: Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County. In what areas do you see room for improvement in its management, and how would you address these challenges?

Education is the largest budget item in Hamilton County, and one area that needs improvement is how we determine which schools receive new buildings, renovations, and essential maintenance. Too often, some districts wait far longer than others for repairs or upgrades.

We need a more transparent, equitable process that prioritizes every district and ensures all students learn in safe, well-maintained buildings they can be proud of. As a School Board member, I would advocate for clear criteria, consistent assessments of facility needs and a long-term plan that directs resources where they are most urgently required. Every student—regardless of zip code—deserves a school environment that supports learning and reflects the value our community places on education.

6) Preventing School Violence: In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, Tennessee has strengthened school safety laws, but many parents continue to express concern in this area. What additional strategies or policy changes would you support in Hamilton County to prevent school shootings, foster community well-being, and protect the rights of students and staff?

In the aftermath of the 2023 Covenant School tragedy, many parents still worry about school safety, even with stronger state laws. In Hamilton County, I believe we can do more to protect students and staff. Strengthening cyber safety is essential, as online threats and harmful digital behavior can escalate quickly. I also support increased video surveillance in classrooms and common areas, implemented with appropriate privacy safeguards. This can help deter misconduct, clarify incidents, and create a safer environment for both teachers and students. My goal is to support practical, proactive measures that build trust with families and ensure every student feels secure at school.

7) Sex Ed Instruction: How should the Hamilton County school district select and source materials for sex education? Should this instruction be provided in schools, strictly at home, or a combination of both? Which organizations, if any, do you believe should be restricted from providing materials, and what is your rationale?

I believe sex education should be a partnership between schools and families. A combination of both home and school instruction allows students to receive accurate information while still honoring the values of their families. As an advocate for youth, I support a collaborative approach where educators and parents work together to select age-appropriate, evidence-based materials. This ensures instruction is inclusive, comprehensive, and aligned with community expectations. When schools and families communicate and share responsibility, students are better equipped to make informed, healthy decisions.

Independent Survey by



8) Racial equity: How should the school district approach teaching racial equity, and what role, if any, should diversity, equity and inclusion play in the curriculum?

Teaching racial equity is about ensuring our classrooms reflect the community they serve and that every child has access to mentors, role models, and educators who believe in high expectations for all students. When students see excellence and leadership represented in their schools, confidence grows and achievement follows.

Chattanooga has always been a city that moves forward. If we want strong schools and a strong future, we must continue supporting approaches that expand opportunity for every student—regardless of race, creed, or class. Diversity, equity, and inclusion play a role in helping schools create welcoming environments where all students feel valued and supported. Our children deserve nothing less, and the future of our community depends on it.

9) Instruction of LGBTQ Issues within Schools: How should Hamilton County schools approach teaching topics related to LGBTQ issues?

Hamilton County schools should approach sensitive topics in a way that supports student learning and prepares young people to be productive, respectful members of the community. Our focus should remain on providing a curriculum that equips students with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate the world safely and responsibly.

Students benefit when schools create environments where every child feels respected and able to learn. By working closely with educators and families, we can ensure that any instruction related to LGBTQ topics is age-appropriate, aligned with state guidelines, and centered on helping students understand how to treat others with dignity while staying focused on their academic success.

10) Gender Identity Instruction: Should Gender Ideology be taught or encouraged within the public school system? Why, or why not?

Our focus should remain on providing a curriculum that equips students with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate the world safely and responsibly.

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11) Immigration Status: How should the school districts address enrollment concerning children of illegal immigrants? Is this a strain on our system that takes away opportunities from citizens and those with legal immigration status? Should additional documentation be required beyond the basic proof of address we have now?

Schools function best when administrators can unite around policies that promote consistent attendance, minimize classroom disruptions, and encourage strong family engagement. If a student lives in the district, can provide proof of address, and seeks an education, we should support that process. Every child deserves the chance to learn in an environment free from fear or anxiety.

At the same time, we can work with families to connect them with community resources that help them navigate pathways toward legal status. Supporting students while also encouraging stability for their families strengthens our schools and our community. Our focus should remain on ensuring that every child who walks through our doors has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed.

Independent Survey by



**2026 Hamilton County General Election
Voter Guide**

Candidates for

**Criminal Court
Clerk**

Survey Questions for 2026 General Criminal Court Clerk Candidates

- 1) **Purpose:** What is the purpose and role of the Criminal Court Clerk, and what values and expertise should the candidate possess?
- 2) **Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives:** What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as Criminal Court Clerk?
- 3) **Moral Values:** Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?
- 4) **Community Impact:** Describe why this position should be taken seriously by voters, how it meaningfully impacts the integrity and effectiveness of the criminal justice system, and what you believe voters may misunderstand or overlook about its importance.
- 5) **Fiscal Responsibility:** How can the management of the Criminal Court Clerk's office save taxpayer dollars or, if mismanaged, result in unnecessary costs?
- 6) **Balancing Transparency and Justice:** Do you agree with public posting of those arrested in local news sites or publications as a deterrent to criminal activity? Explain the pros and cons of such a policy.
- 7) **Interstate Probation Tracking:** How should probation records be shared between states and jurisdictions to ensure individuals on probation are effectively monitored if they relocate?
- 8) **Addressing Delinquent Fines:** Should asset confiscation or other measures be considered for individuals delinquent in paying criminal fines? Please explain your reasoning.
- 9) **Efficiency through Technology:** How can technology be used to reduce costs and improve efficiency in managing records and documentation for criminal proceedings?

Independent Survey by



Criminal Court Clerk Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Vince Dean



Aaliyah Hakeem

Independent Survey by





VINCE DEAN

Candidate Information

Campaign Website:	Vote Vince Dean on Facebook
Email Address:	votevinedean@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Criminal Court Clerk
Military Background:	27 yrs Law enforcement and 9 years in the Legislature
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	67 years

1) Purpose: What is the purpose and role of the Criminal Court Clerk, and what values and expertise should the candidate possess?

The role of the Criminal Court Clerk is multi-faceted. The clerk is charged as the keeper of the records for all criminal court cases, both at the Session's level and the State Criminal Courts. He or she is also charged with collecting the fees and fines, as ordered by the court. The clerk oversees as well as manages the \$5 Million annual budget, as well as the 60 Deputy Clerks. It is essential that the Criminal Court Clerk shows competent leadership skills and also has the ability to manage a budget.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as Criminal Court Clerk?

Since taking office, I have used my leadership skills to assemble a team of some of the best deputy clerks this county has ever seen. In rare occurrences we have found it necessary to sever ties with deputy clerks that did not adhere to our standards. We have done that without apology, as we recognize that we serve the public. We have managed our budget and stayed within the confines of our "letter of agreement" with the Mayor's office each year since taking office. We created a payment center making it easier and more convenient for citizens that owed court fines in both the Session's and State Criminal Offices. We did the same thing with our expungement center.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Absolutely! the Ten Commandments were given to Moses at Mount Sinai and should be the foundation for all laws and ordinances. More than anything I am a firm believer that this would be a wonderful world if all citizens would adopt the Ten Commandments as guide for their lives.

4) Community Impact: Describe why this position should be taken seriously by voters, how it meaningfully impacts the integrity and effectiveness of the criminal justice system, and what you believe voters may misunderstand or overlook about its importance.

While the majority of voters will never set foot in any of our offices or even in any of our courts, their tax dollars certainly can. It is imperative that the Criminal Court Clerk has a history of being able to manage funds both personally and professionally. It is also vital to have a good leader that can discern good employees from bad. An effective leader must be able to separate the wheat from the chaff. Then they must be able to rise above the criticism of those whose employment is terminated. I must be able to lay my head down each night and I certainly can.

5) Fiscal Responsibility: How can the management of the Criminal Court Clerk's office save taxpayer dollars or, if mismanaged, result in unnecessary costs?

Poor fiscal responsibility can lead to funds being diverted from the general fund (taxpayer dollars) to the budget of this office. Very simply, if the Clerk cannot manage the budget, the taxpayers are left to make up the difference. It is also vital that the clerk choose the right employees and be able to recognize their talents and place them in the most productive positions. There are many different jobs to be performed in this office and not everyone is suited for every job. Strong leadership skills ensure strong job performances by the appropriate deputy clerks.

Independent Survey by



6) Balancing Transparency and Justice: Do you agree with public posting of those arrested in local news sites or publications as a deterrent to criminal activity? Explain the pros and cons of such a policy.

While I may have my own personal opinion about this, that is exactly what it is: my personal opinion. My office does not provide or own any mugshots. Those are property of the Sheriff's Office. We do maintain the arrest records, which are public record. Whether I believe the publication of such is a deterrent is irrelevant. The law says that such information can be published and local media outlets make the determination as to whether or not they are published. Again any change to such would need to be done by the Tennessee General Assembly. We are charged with following the law.

7) Interstate Probation Tracking: How should probation records be shared between states and jurisdictions to ensure individuals on probation are effectively monitored if they relocate?

My office does not handle probation issues. They are handled by The State office of Probation for the State Court cases and by Hamilton County probation office for Session's court cases.

8) Addressing Delinquent Fines: Should asset confiscation or other measures be considered for individuals delinquent in paying criminal fines? Please explain your reasoning.

There are many schools of thought on this. In some smaller counties, asset confiscation has been used. However, in a county our size it would be almost impossible to utilize this measure. When I first took office we tried to garnish employment pay. We quickly found that when a defendant was garnished at Wendy's they would quit and go work at McDonalds. We have had good success with our collection agency. We also work closely with defendants to be on a payment plan and retain their drivers license. A large number of our customers are indigent, as determined by the court. They frankly don't have any money. We deposit around \$6 million per year. More than our budget.

9) Efficiency through Technology: How can technology be used to reduce costs and improve efficiency in managing records and documentation for criminal proceedings?

Our office has been on the cutting edge of this issue. We developed an APP for the judicial system in Hamilton County. Citizens can find court dates, dispositions and most of our records that are public. We partnered with V.I.N.E. (Victim Notification Everyday) where defendants and interested parties are notified of upcoming court appearances. V.I.N.E. has helped reduce our FTA (Failure to Appears) drastically, thus reducing the number of defendants arrested and incarcerated until court. We have developed a QR code to allow defendants with cases dismissed to apply for expungement without coming into our office. Electronic submission of court requirements ordered by a judge is now available. More that 120 words don't permit.

Independent Survey by





AALIYAH HAKEEM

Candidate Information

Campaign Website:	https://aaliyahhakeemforcriminalcourtclerk.com
Email Address:	Info@voteyourvoice.com
Occupation/Vocation:	N/A
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	61

1) Purpose: What is the purpose and role of the Criminal Court Clerk, and what values and expertise should the candidate possess?

The role of the Criminal Court Clerk is to provide accurate, timely, past and present information to and for sitting Judges to make the most informed decisions of guilt or innocence concerning those persons charged with offenses against society. The Criminal Court Clerk is also an officer of the court sworn to provide any and all information to Prosecutors, Public Defenders, individual Defense Attorneys and the Charged Person's (defendant's) families.

Independent Survey by



2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as Criminal Court Clerk?

My area of focus and/or expertise is to follow the the Legality and Policy of the Criminal Court Clerks Office, as a sworn Officer of the Court, that any and everyone seeking and needing Criminal Information, forms and documents, be provided said information with dignity, respect and Compassion.

My initiative, as Criminal Court Clerk, is to ensure all resources of this office be made available in the form of expert Knowledgeable and most Accountable Customer Service.

3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Yes: government laws, ordinances and regulations should follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments; this country was founded on the King James Bible version of the Constitution. The Courts in Europe still dress and are named as founded on Christian Values and Principles, which were transferred to the Americas in its inception; therefore, any law, ordinance and or regulation should still follow its moral inception.

4) Community Impact: Describe why this position should be taken seriously by voters, how it meaningfully impacts the integrity and effectiveness of the criminal justice system, and what you believe voters may misunderstand or overlook about its importance.

The Criminal Court Clerks Office should be taken absolutely serious by voters due to its structured position in the Judicial Process: The Criminal Court Clerks Office is responsible for vital pieces of information, dates, times and activities to prove or disprove intricate parts of Criminal Cases for attorneys, judges and the public; therefore, the function of this office is paramount to the conclusion of any legal issue and or process.

5) Fiscal Responsibility: How can the management of the Criminal Court Clerk's office save taxpayer dollars or, if mismanaged, result in unnecessary costs?

Because the Criminal Court Clerks Office is funded by the collection of fines and costs of the defendants use of the legal system, and other funds provided to this office from the County Government that cover salaries, supplies etc., as with any business, the management of this office is to ensure all areas function as financially responsible as possible; and of course, mismanagement of funds and resources will result in finding and/or asking for funds to meet shortfalls and the possible dismissal of employees; which of course will effectively affect office performance and function.

Independent Survey by



6) Balancing Transparency and Justice: Do you agree with public posting of those arrested in local news sites or publications as a deterrent to criminal activity? Explain the pros and cons of such a policy.

I am undecided: after all the years working for the Criminal Court Clerks Office, I am not decided whether publicly posting arrests in local news sites or publications is good or bad. Of course it is a deterrent; however, we continually have people committing the same offenses daily or until they are caught; even while working for the office, the cases and people I saw and heard were deterrent enough for me personally. So I will suggest that the consequence of Public Humiliation, loss of employment and public judgment following any arrest is deterrent enough; and maybe seeing a friend or family member in a precarious position is the payoff.

7) Interstate Probation Tracking: How should probation records be shared between states and jurisdictions to ensure individuals on probation are effectively monitored if they relocate?

Presently, the probation records are shared via court to court or probation office to probation office; in the event a defendant is allowed, by a Judge, to relocate across town or another state; however, in the event the defendant is or does not adhere or violates his/her probation order, a warrant of arrest is then Issued for the defendant wherever he/she may be found, and effectively causing that person to be remanded to the probation issuing jurisdiction. This is about the most effective assurance existing. Any other ideas or implementations must discussed with the local probation office, Judges and Clerks Office.

8) Addressing Delinquent Fines: Should asset confiscation or other measures be considered for individuals delinquent in paying criminal fines? Please explain your reasoning.

When Letter notification, follow up letters and possible phone calls do not cause payment of fines and costs to the court, yes asset confiscation should be allowed, but not without exhausting all notification effort(s). The person and/or defendant(s) are made aware and given a copy of fines and costs incurred, before leaving custody; they are tasked with an in court review date to verify that fines and costs are being paid. The only time assets are confiscated is when the account reaches non-payment or delinquent status is usually due to the defendant having relocated, deceased or both; therefore, continued payment to keep the office in compliance and on budget is a necessity.

9) Efficiency through Technology: How can technology be used to reduce costs and improve efficiency in managing records and documentation for criminal proceedings?

By attending all or most conferences, Judges, Public Defenders and District Attorneys, the Clerks Office would be able to hear and see what each aspect of the judicial process is responsible for in the Legal, Judicial Process, we would be better able to find, enhance or even create technology that would reduce time, cost, function, documentation and management of records; thus effectively enhancing efficiency. At present, the clerks office functions according to its best level, but with attendance to conferences and possibly initiating a clerk's conference will make our offices and work exceptional.

Independent Survey by



2026 Hamilton County General Election Voter Guide

Candidates for

Sheriff

Survey Questions for 2026 General Sheriff Candidates

- 1) **Purpose:** What do you view as the purpose and role of the Sheriff?
- 2) **Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives:** What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as Sheriff?
- 3) **Moral Values:** Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?
- 4) **County Citizen:** If an agency of the Federal Government violated the due process rights of a citizen in Hamilton County, what would you do?
- 5) **Immigration Enforcement:** As Sheriff of Hamilton County, how would you approach cooperation with federal immigration authorities?
- 6) **Building a Strong and Trusted Police Force:** Law enforcement hiring and staffing can be challenging. What policies or strategies would you implement to attract, hire, and retain the best candidates while ensuring community trust and public safety?
- 7) **Interpreting the Constitution:** Do you consider the U.S. Constitution to be a living document that evolves over time, or a fixed framework? Please explain your reasoning.
- 8) **Handling Cases Involving Undocumented Individuals:** When encountering a situation involving an illegal immigrant, such as a DUI or other legal matters, what procedures will you follow before involving ICE?

Independent Survey by



Sheriff Candidates

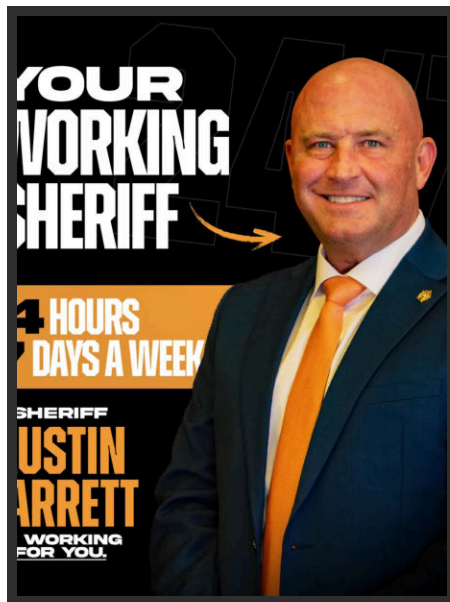
(in alphabetical order)



Sheriff Austin Garrett

Independent Survey by





SHERIFF AUSTIN GARRETT

Candidate Information

Campaign Website:	austingarrettsheriff.com
Email Address:	info@austingarrettsheriff.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Sheriff
Years as a resident of Hamilton County:	N/A

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the Sheriff?

As a constitutionally elected Sheriff, it is my duty to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of law enforcement services to the citizens of Hamilton County.

2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as Sheriff?

With nearly 33 years of law enforcement experience, including command and executive-level responsibilities, and most recently serving Hamilton County as your Sheriff, we have cast a clear vision and have transitioned to an intelligence-led policing philosophy in the deployment of personnel and resources. This is an approach I will continue to lead, as it supports the efficient and effective delivery of law enforcement services. My continued focus is on reducing overall crime and improving the quality of life for the citizens of Hamilton County.

Independent Survey by



3) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?

Yes. Our nation was founded on Judeo-Christian values that are reflected in and carried through our Constitution. Laws, ordinances, and regulations that align with the Constitution are grounded in the moral principles of the Ten Commandments.

4) County Citizen: If an agency of the Federal Government violated the due process rights of a citizen in Hamilton County, what would you do?

Follow the law. I would adhere to the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Tennessee for which I am sworn. I believe one of the highest responsibilities of a Sheriff is to act ethically, morally, and within the law.

5) Immigration Enforcement: As Sheriff of Hamilton County, how would you approach cooperation with federal immigration authorities?

As Sheriff, I have visited our southern border with Senator Bill Hagerty. I was also one of the first Sheriff's Offices in Tennessee to sign on to the 287(g) program.

6) Building a Strong and Trusted Police Force: Law enforcement hiring and staffing can be challenging. What policies or strategies would you implement to attract, hire, and retain the best candidates while ensuring community trust and public safety?

Your Hamilton County Sheriff's Office is nationally recognized for strategic recruitment and retention of deputies in both corrections and law enforcement. This is directly linked to our agency brand founded on professionalism, customer service, and innovation.

7) Interpreting the Constitution: Do you consider the U.S. Constitution to be a living document that evolves over time, or a fixed framework? Please explain your reasoning.

I firmly uphold my oath and obligation to the United States and Tennessee Constitutions.

8) Handling Cases Involving Undocumented Individuals: When encountering a situation involving an illegal immigrant, such as a DUI or other legal matters, what procedures will you follow before involving ICE?

Your Hamilton County Sheriff's Office follows the law. Please see question 8.

Independent Survey by



**2026 Hamilton County General / Tennessee
Primary Election Voter Guide**

**Democratic Primary & General
Candidates**

Democratic

2026 Tennessee Primary Election Voter Guide

Democratic Candidates for

State Executive Committee

Survey Questions for 2026 Primary State Executive Committee Candidates

- 1) **Purpose:** What do you view as the purpose and role of the State Executive Committee and a State Executive Committeeman/Committeewoman?
- 2) **Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives:** What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise?
- 3) **Accomplishments & Priorities:** If you are the incumbent: What key accomplishments would you like to highlight, and what are your main priorities moving forward that you want to share with Christian voters? If you are a challenger: What are your top priorities and planned initiatives if elected, and what would you most want Christian voters to know about your vision for the office?
- 4) **Moral Values:** Should the Tennessee {Party} Party's platform, rules, and candidate support follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Please elaborate on your viewpoint and reasoning.
- 5) **Election Integrity:** What actions would you support as a State Executive Committeeman/Committeewoman to advance stronger election security measures in Tennessee, such as citizenship verification, secure chain-of-custody procedures, voter ID protections, and revising ballot deadlines?
- 6) **Candidate Vetting & Values:** How would you help ensure that candidates receiving Tennessee {Party} Party support align with biblical principles on life, family, religious liberty, and scope of government?
- 7) **Open/Closed Primary:** What is your position on Tennessee's current primary system? Should the {Party} Party push for a fully closed primary with formal party registration, or maintain the current system that allows voters to declare affiliation on primary day? Please explain your reasoning.
- 8) **Grassroots vs Establishment:** How will you ensure grassroots {Party} Party voters — not just party insiders or donors — continue to have a meaningful voice in Tennessee {Party} Party decisions?
- 9) **Transparency Inside the Party:** How can the Tennessee {Party} Party become more transparent to regular voters regarding endorsements, candidate qualification disputes, and internal decision-making?

Independent Survey by



State Executive Committee Committeeman 11 (D) Candidates

(in alphabetical order)

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

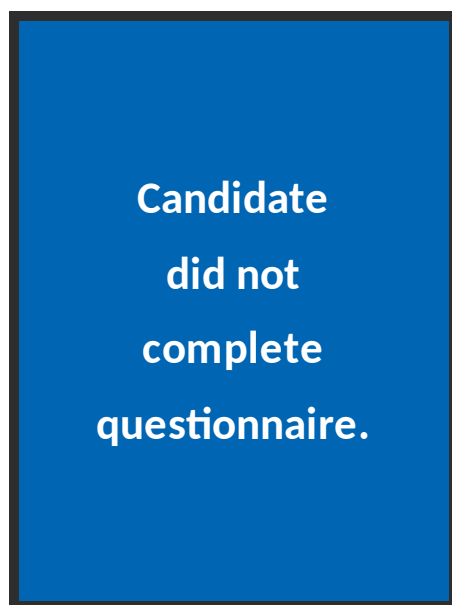
Tahcere Alexander

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

Ryan V. Scofield

Independent Survey by





TAHCERE ALEXANDER

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Tahcere Alexander; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

: Committeeman 11 (D)

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**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

RYAN V. SCOFIELD

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Ryan V. Scofield; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

: Committeeman 11 (D)

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State Executive Committee Uncontested Candidates

(in alphabetical order)

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

Chris Anderson (Committeeman 10 (D))

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

Lisa Crowder (Committeewoman 11 (D))



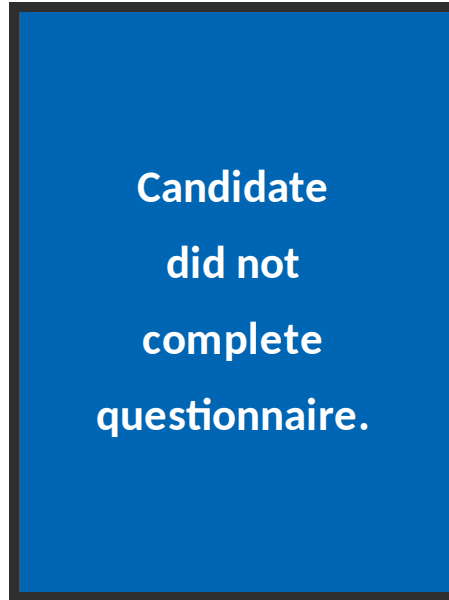
**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

Heather McClendon (Committeewoman 10 (D))

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CHRIS ANDERSON

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Chris Anderson; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

: Committeeman 10 (D)

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**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

LISA CROWDER

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Lisa Crowder; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

: Committeewoman 11 (D)

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**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

HEATHER MCCLENDON

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Heather McClendon; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

: Committeewoman 10 (D)

Independent Survey by



2026 Tennessee Primary Election Voter Guide

Democratic Candidates for

TN House of Representatives

Survey Questions for 2026 Primary TN House of Representatives Candidates

- 1) **Purpose:** What do you view as the purpose and role of the TN House of Representatives?
- 2) **Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives:** What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise?
- 3) **Accomplishments & Priorities:** If you are the incumbent: What key accomplishments would you like to highlight, and what are your main priorities moving forward that you want to share with Christian voters? If you are a challenger: What are your top priorities and planned initiatives if elected, and what would you most want Christian voters to know about your vision for the office?
- 4) **Moral Values:** Should governmental laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Please elaborate on your viewpoint and reasoning.
- 5) **Federalism and State Sovereignty:** What is your position on the sovereignty of Tennessee within the United States, and do you believe that the powers of individual states should be considered superior to those of the federal government? Please explain your views in detail, including how you interpret the balance of power between state and federal authorities.
- 6) **AI Data Centers:** What is your position on the rapid expansion of AI data centers in Tennessee? How would you address concerns about increased electricity rates, pollution, water usage, and taxpayer subsidies while still encouraging economic growth?
- 7) **Education Funding and Immigration:** What is your stance on the use of taxpayer funds in Tennessee to support the education of illegal aliens and their children who have recently arrived in the state? Please provide a detailed explanation of your position, including how you believe such funding impacts both the state's budget and the broader community.
- 8) **Government Assistance & Fraud:** In light of fraud found in many states' government assistance programs, what policies can you craft for auditing and prevention of fraud in Tennessee?
- 9) **Unborn Life:** In light of the May 14th Supreme Court ruling continuing mail access to mifepristone at this time, what legislation would you craft to protect our women, children and citizens of Tennessee, or make available the reversal pill?
- 10) **Ballot Security:** Given the high difficulty of fully auditing electronic voting machines and past incidents of such machines being hacked in important elections, what measures would you support to increase transparency in ballot processing? Would you support end-to-end video recording of ballot chain of custody, automatic public access to ballot handling recordings, and making it easier for candidates to request hand counts in close elections?

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- 11) School Choice:** What is your position on expanding school choice in Tennessee, including education savings accounts or vouchers? How would you ensure that public funds follow the child to schools that align with parental values and do not disproportionately benefit secular, non-Christian, or ideologically opposed institutions?

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TN House of Representatives District 26th Candidates

(in alphabetical order)

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

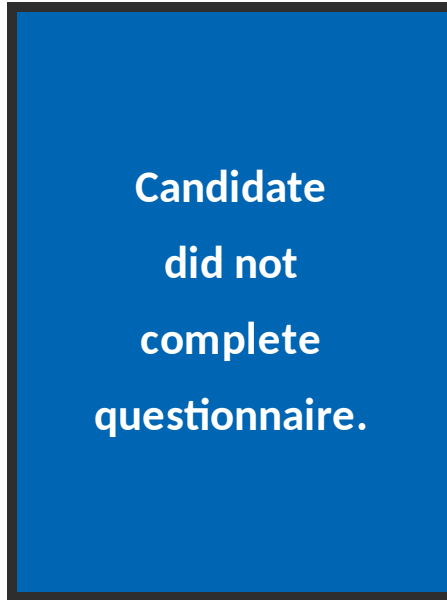
Nathan B. Denton

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

Lucian LaFae

Independent Survey by





NATHAN B. DENTON

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Nathan B. Denton; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

District: District 26th

Independent Survey by



**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

LUCIAN LAFAE

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Lucian LaFae; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

District: District 26th

Independent Survey by



TN House of Representatives Uncontested Candidates

(in alphabetical order)

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

Yusuf A. Hakeem (District 28th)

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

Paige Quirin (District 27th)

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

Art Rymer (District 30th)

Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.

Ryan V. Scofield (District 29th)

Independent Survey by



**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

YUSUF A. HAKEEM

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Yusuf A. Hakeem; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

District: District 28th

Independent Survey by



**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

PAIGE QUIRIN

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Paige Quirin; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

District: District 27th

Independent Survey by



**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

ART RYMER

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Art Rymer; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

District: District 30th

Independent Survey by



**Candidate
did not
complete
questionnaire.**

RYAN V. SCOFIELD

We made multiple attempts to communicate with Ryan V. Scofield; however, the Candidate did not complete the survey by the submission deadline.

Candidate Information

District: District 29th

Independent Survey by



2026 Tennessee Primary Election Voter Guide

Democratic Candidates for

TN State Senate

Survey Questions for 2026 Primary TN State Senate Candidates

- 1) **Purpose:** What do you view as the purpose and role of the TN State Senate?
- 2) **Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives:** What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise?
- 3) **Accomplishments & Priorities:** If you are the incumbent: What key accomplishments would you like to highlight, and what are your main priorities moving forward that you want to share with Christian voters? If you are a challenger: What are your top priorities and planned initiatives if elected, and what would you most want Christian voters to know about your vision for the office?
- 4) **Moral Values:** Should governmental laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Please elaborate on your viewpoint and reasoning.
- 5) **Federalism and State Sovereignty:** What is your position on the sovereignty of Tennessee within the United States, and do you believe that the powers of individual states should be considered superior to those of the federal government? Please explain your views in detail, including how you interpret the balance of power between state and federal authorities.
- 6) **AI Data Centers:** What is your position on the rapid expansion of AI data centers in Tennessee? How would you address concerns about increased electricity rates, pollution, water usage, and taxpayer subsidies while still encouraging economic growth?
- 7) **Education Funding and Immigration:** What is your stance on the use of taxpayer funds in Tennessee to support the education of illegal aliens and their children who have recently arrived in the state? Please provide a detailed explanation of your position, including how you believe such funding impacts both the state's budget and the broader community.
- 8) **Government Assistance & Fraud:** In light of fraud found in many states' government assistance programs, what policies can you craft for auditing and prevention of fraud in Tennessee?
- 9) **Unborn Life:** In light of the May 14th Supreme Court ruling continuing mail access to mifepristone at this time, what legislation would you craft to protect our women, children and citizens of Tennessee, or make available the reversal pill?
- 10) **Ballot Security:** Given the high difficulty of fully auditing electronic voting machines and past incidents of such machines being hacked in important elections, what measures would you support to increase transparency in ballot processing? Would you support end-to-end video recording of ballot chain of custody, automatic public access to ballot handling recordings, and making it easier for candidates to request hand counts in close elections?
- 11) **School Choice:** What is your position on expanding school choice in Tennessee, including education savings accounts or vouchers? How would you ensure that public funds follow the child to schools that align with parental values and do not disproportionately benefit secular, non-Christian, or ideologically opposed institutions?

Independent Survey by



TN State Senate Uncontested Candidates

(in alphabetical order)



Tim Roberts (District 11th)

Independent Survey by





TIM ROBERTS

Candidate Information

District:	District 11th
Campaign Website:	votetimroberts.com
Email Address:	troberts502@gmail.com
Occupation/Vocation:	Disabled Stay at Home Dad
Years as a resident of Tennessee:	35 Dad lived in NW GA

1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the TN State Senate?

To facilitate the means for every Tennessean in the pursuit of Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To debate, review, and enact legislation to aid in that pursuit. Not to benefit corporations, big tech, or political leadership.

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2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise?

I want to introduce legislation that would require every bill, resolution, or government document to be written at the average reading level in the state.

I want to put a ban in for profit prisons.

Repeal the grocery tax.

All school lunches and breakfast provided at no extra charge to families.

These are just a few of the items I want to address.

3) Accomplishments & Priorities: If you are the incumbent: What key accomplishments would you like to highlight, and what are your main priorities moving forward that you want to share with Christian voters? If you are a challenger: What are your top priorities and planned initiatives if elected, and what would you most want Christian voters to know about your vision for the office?

4) Moral Values: Should governmental laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Please elaborate on your viewpoint and reasoning.

No, I do not. Only because I believe religion does not have a place in our government. While the Ten Commandments can be the moral principles on which we base our own individual beliefs on, religion has no place in our government or as the basis of our rules, respectfully.

5) Federalism and State Sovereignty: What is your position on the sovereignty of Tennessee within the United States, and do you believe that the powers of individual states should be considered superior to those of the federal government? Please explain your views in detail, including how you interpret the balance of power between state and federal authorities.

The way we were taught in school was the order was Federal, State, then local. I still believe that. That does not mean that you do not push back against laws that our state might not agree with.

6) AI Data Centers: What is your position on the rapid expansion of AI data centers in Tennessee? How would you address concerns about increased electricity rates, pollution, water usage, and taxpayer subsidies while still encouraging economic growth?

No more AI data centers in Tennessee, period. It does not benefit the everyday citizen, only the wealthy. There are other areas in which we can generate economic growth in our state without selling out our future to the elite.

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7) Education Funding and Immigration: What is your stance on the use of taxpayer funds in Tennessee to support the education of illegal aliens and their children who have recently arrived in the state? Please provide a detailed explanation of your position, including how you believe such funding impacts both the state's budget and the broader community.

All children should be educated, fed, and taken care of while in the state of Tennessee, no matter their immigration status. Holding children responsible for something they have no control over is about the furthest away from being Christ like one could possibly be. I believe that it is such a miniscule amount compared to the overall budget it is a non issue. If it was, the governor could have not given a nearly 1 billion dollar rebate to large corporations last year.

8) Government Assistance & Fraud: In light of fraud found in many states' government assistance programs, what policies can you craft for auditing and prevention of fraud in Tennessee?

Personally, I would look into how corporations are abusing our system well before I will start investigating citizens that are largely just trying to survive. I find it strange honestly that this question blames citizens and not large corporations for the amount of fraud committed. Doesn't seem like a question for a church questionnaire. Maybe for a political party, but not a church. Respectfully.

9) Unborn Life: In light of the May 14th Supreme Court ruling continuing mail access to mifepristone at this time, what legislation would you craft to protect our women, children and citizens of Tennessee, or make available the reversal pill?

What exactly would I be protecting them from? The pill has to be ordered. It is not given out anywhere. This question seems to be asked liked the previous question. Not from a church perspective, but a political party. I worry that the lines between the two are being intentionally blurred.

10) Ballot Security: Given the high difficulty of fully auditing electronic voting machines and past incidents of such machines being hacked in important elections, what measures would you support to increase transparency in ballot processing? Would you support end-to-end video recording of ballot chain of custody, automatic public access to ballot handling recordings, and making it easier for candidates to request hand counts in close elections?

But auditing electronic voting machines is not highly difficult. And it certainly is not a given. The question is slanted and biased from the beginning. Again, this is being asked not from a church perspective, but a political party. How do you answer a question that was not asked in good faith? What evidence of any of these assertions do you have occurring in Tennessee?

We have very secure elections in Tennessee.

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11) School Choice: What is your position on expanding school choice in Tennessee, including education savings accounts or vouchers? How would you ensure that public funds follow the child to schools that align with parental values and do not disproportionately benefit secular, non-Christian, or ideologically opposed institutions?

School choice should be repealed and those having found to have profited from it in our general assembly should be charged accordingly. If you want education to be fixed, fully fund education in Tennessee.

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Notes

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