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Maricopa County Attorney Appointment Application Questionnaire

1. What would your top priorities for the office be if you were appointed Maricopa County Attorney?

My top priorities are to rebuild (1) community trust (2) law enforcement trust and (3) employee trust with the County Attorney's Office. This will require strong leadership, integrity, accountability, and innovation.

Community Trust:

Rebuilding community trust will take time, but it is imperative that all members of the community feel the criminal justice system is fair and protects everyone. Our criminal justice system relies on victims reporting crimes and witnesses assisting law enforcement and prosecutions. A Community Based Prosecution Model discussed below will help improve community relations. The Maricopa County Attorney's Office will again start attending Business Alliance and Neighborhood Coalition Meetings to address community concerns and needs. Under the past four administrations, I served as the designated bias crimes prosecutor. I was regularly tasked with going into minority and immigrant communities with law enforcement to encourage them to report crimes and assist with prosecutions. My years of experience attending community events has prepared me for our current challenges. It is imperative that we fulfill our obligation as a fair "Administrator of Justice" and work to improve trust in our criminal justice system. We will do this by reaching out to our diverse communities and looking for ways to better address the homelessness, mental health, substance abuse and treatment issues currently straining our criminal justice system. As the County Attorney, I am not just interested in reactively holding criminals accountable, but I am committed to proactively looking for collaborative, innovative ways to address crime and improve community safety through education, prevention, and treatment. By working with leaders in the community to address these concerns, we will begin rebuilding community trust.

Law Enforcement Officer Trust:

Our law enforcement officers are losing trust in the Maricopa County Attorney's Office. I have worked closely with law enforcement during my career at the Maricopa County Attorney's Office and recently reconnected with officers from multiple police agencies across the Valley. They have expressed the following concerns regarding the office:

1. The 180 submittals that were not filed within the statute of limitations.

2. The low percentage of cases filed by the County Attorney's Office. Law enforcement is seeing a record number of turndowns. In the last published Maricopa County Attorney's Office Annual Report the percentage of cases filed was under 50%.
3. The backlog in critical incidents. Some officer involved shooting cases have been under investigation by the Maricopa County Attorney's Office for over two years. These delays place added stress on the officers involved, a cloud over the police departments, and have left families waiting for answers.
4. Currently, assaults on police officers are rarely charged, unless captured on video. The police officers who are kicked or hit from the side, where no video evidence exists, are not receiving justice.
5. A complete breakdown in communication between the office and law enforcement has left our police officers feeling frustrated and not supported by the Maricopa County Attorney's Office.

I spent over five years as the Bureau Chief of the Northwest Valley Bureau implementing a Community Based Prosecution Model. We worked closely with law enforcement to identify prolific offenders in the community, assisted with training and attended community neighborhood events to address rising crime rates and community concerns. This model that was highly successful, and embraced by the community, under the Bill Montgomery Administration, needs to be reinstated. It allowed us to better use our resources to target the high crime areas and the violent offenders in the community and resulted in lower crime rates and safer communities. Currently, communication between the police agencies and the attorneys is fractured. Collaboration to improve safety in our community is lacking. This needs to change.

I currently have the endorsements of the Phoenix Police Sergeant and Lieutenants Association, the Police Chiefs of the West Valley and the Maricopa County Colleges Police Officers Association. In the next month, I have five additional meetings to obtain endorsements. With law enforcement, actions speak louder than words. I am a respected trial attorney and a trusted leader. This does not mean that I am a rubber stamp for law enforcement. I have prosecuted police officers when they have committed crimes. I have been pressured by high level police command staff to reconsider decisions made to turndown homicide cases. My transparency and willingness to talk out the issues with law enforcement and explain my rationale, even when they disagreed with me on the outcome, has earned me this reputation of trust. My appointment will convey to law enforcement that their concerns were heard. As staffing allows, I will begin addressing the backlog and charging concerns. Within my first week, I will address the communication breakdown between the office and law enforcement and ensure that we are working together to identify and prosecute the most violent offenses in our community.

Employee trust:

On day one, I will work to improve morale, and address the current breakdown of communication within the office. I will also utilize the remarkable untapped talent that already exists within the office. The dedicated employees within the Maricopa County Attorney's Office have innovative ideas for improvement, yet many of those ideas have gone unheard. It is well known amongst

the employees that “good ideas often die on the vine,” leaving employees frustrated and feeling unappreciated. I am committed to harnessing this untapped talent and embracing innovative ideas to allow us to become a more adaptable organization. To retain top talent, it is imperative that we look at salaries, improve the office culture, and establish a leadership program to develop future managers throughout the office. The dedicated workforce of the Maricopa County Attorney’s Office is strained. They are struggling to effectively manage their caseloads and provide the level of dedicated service deserved by victims of crime, law enforcement and all county agencies. I want to create a safe culture where new ideas flourish allowing the organization to quickly adapt to address our changing community.

For over two decades, I have trained hundreds of prosecutors and worked with large numbers of paralegals and support staff. My bureaus have always had high morale and low attrition. Having personally observed some of my most talented colleagues resign after they transferred out of my bureau due to entirely preventable situations, I understand and am concerned about the internal issues within the office. Retention of experienced prosecutors has now reached a crisis level, with nearly a 20% vacancy rate. High caseloads and staffing issues have resulted in large numbers of criminal cases being dropped or not being charged at all. The number of criminal cases not being charged is a serious concern, especially for our local police departments. It has been brought to my attention from some of our elected officials that staffing concerns in the Civil Division is causing delays and issues within the elected departments as well.

Only an experienced prosecutor who has worked in the trenches of our criminal justice system understands, as I do, the complex problems currently facing the office. If we do not get immediate help for our staff, it is only a matter of time before continued high-profile mistakes occur. To lower our attrition rate, employees throughout the office need to know they are valued, appreciated, supported and that additional assistance is on the horizon. To fulfill the mission of the office, it is imperative that I rebuild the trust of our workforce, improve our work culture, and hire as many skilled employees as quickly as possible. I cannot fulfill my vision and priorities for the office without a strong and talented team, this will be my first priority.

2. The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors certified the election results in 2020. A significant amount of information regarding the election process and the allegations of fraud have been distributed to the public and made available. The Maricopa County Attorney is the legal representative of the board of supervisors. We expect a candidate applying for the job would become familiar with the allegations and evidence. Based on your review of the allegations of fraud and the information made publicly available, did the Board of Supervisors err in certifying the 2020 election results?

The Board of Supervisors did not err in certifying the 2020 election results. The election process in Maricopa County was observed by members of the public, media, and representatives from both parties. The machine counts were backed up by a sampling of hand counts. At the time of certification, there were no complaints alleging widespread fraud filed with the Attorney General’s Office. In fact, the Attorney General went on national television, saying there was no

evidence of widespread fraud. Furthermore, there was only a limited number of lawsuits challenging the election, and none of which alleged widespread fraud or incidents that would have changed the outcome of the election, even if successful. Finally, it is important to note that the long-awaited Attorney General's Report, issued eighteen months after the election, still does not outline evidence of widespread fraud that would have overturned the election. This follows the Special Masters Report, in which independent auditors, selected by the parties to the audit, found no evidence of fraud. For these reasons, the Board of Supervisors did not error in certifying the election.

3. The Maricopa County Attorney represents the citizens of the State of Arizona in criminal matters, but also the Board of Supervisors and every other county elected official in civil matters. How would you plan to address the staffing shortage in both the criminal and civil divisions to ensure criminal justice is served and county offices are properly represented?

With every incoming administration, the prior administration has prepared a White Paper outlining specific areas of concern and updated practices and staffing issues for every criminal and civil bureau in the office. I expect that this has been done. If not, that will be my first directive to the entire Senior Management Team. At a minimum, to address our staffing shortages, we will need to reinstitute the national recruitment efforts implemented under the Thomas Administration, expand our Intern and Conditional Hire programs, improve recruitment efforts in our law schools, explore salary increases and make efforts to rehire prior attorneys. My priority will be to meet with the Board of Supervisors and the heads of all county departments including other elected officials to identify issues and identify how the Maricopa County Attorney's Office can improve services. I recommend we complete a market analysis to make sure our salaries are competitive. In the interim we need to consider the utilization of contract attorneys as a short-term solution to our vacancies. When discussing staffing shortages, it is imperative that we address the morale and culture issues as discussed under question number one. Issues present in both the Civil Division and the Criminal Division will need to be addressed to ensure criminal justice is served and county offices are properly represented. We also need to mentor and develop future leaders in the office. When the culture is good in an organization, word gets out to the community and recruitment efforts improve. For the long-term health of the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, we must recruit, retain, mentor, and develop our future leaders.