

## **Maricopa County Attorney Appointment Application Questionnaire**

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

The first duty of the County Attorney's Office is to deliver justice. However, justice cannot be achieved without the trust and confidence of the community it serves. As County Attorney, it will be my number one priority to deploy my experience and integrity to restore trust in the Maricopa County Attorney's Office. Ensuring that victims, law enforcement, taxpayers, and the Board of Supervisors have faith in our justice system is vital to the mission and success of the office. The following priorities must be addressed if the office is to protect the residents of Maricopa County and to effectively meet its statutory responsibilities.

#### **Workforce Shortage**

A top priority will be focused on rebuilding a qualified and supported workforce. It is imperative that victims have highly qualified individuals fighting for justice on their behalf. It is equally imperative that ethical and professional individuals are honoring the rights of the accused. I will focus resources on training, retention, and recruitment of MCAO employees. Providing responsive customer service to the community and county government can only occur if we swiftly address staff shortages throughout the office. My response to question 3 will elaborate on this priority.

#### **Charging Backlog and Timely Reviews of Submittals**

The rise in violent crime, a shortage of employees, and the court shutdown during the pandemic have created severe obstacles to the timely review, charging, and prosecution of cases. As County Attorney, I am going to order a full review of our charging process as well as a review of prosecutor caseloads which have grown to be untenable in all divisions of the office. With this information, I will identify technology solutions and staffing assignments to ensure cases are being reviewed in a timely manner and prosecutors have more manageable caseloads.

#### **Accountability of County Attorney**

At the same time, I will strengthen oversight of the elected position of County Attorney. This position is one of the most powerful elected offices in the state: The decisions made by a county attorney quite literally involve life and death matters and impact the liberty of those who live in our free society. If appointed, I will create a committee to review and revise MCAO employee policy 10.5, which outlines the process for employees to report unethical behavior by the County Attorney or Chief Deputy to the State Bar of Arizona. Having recently operated under this policy, I believe this policy should be revised and expanded to ensure accountability of this very powerful public official.

While the committee will do its own independent review, I will ask them to create protections for lawyers in the office who witness actions by the elected county attorney or chief deputy that are not in the best interests of the public. It is imperative they be able to share information with the Board of Supervisors given its fiduciary responsibilities to the public. I will also reach out to the newly formed Arizona Supreme Court Task Force Reviewing Roles and Responsibilities of Public Attorneys as it reviews ethical rules to provide firsthand experience regarding the oversight of public attorneys.

As one of the five division chiefs who sought to inform others of actions by the prior county attorney that were averse to the public and the office, I know firsthand that speaking out in this manner can come at great personal and professional risk.

Accountability also must extend to convictions. As the attorney who started the Prosecution Integrity Unit, I would continue its work in reviewing convictions where there are claims of either state misconduct or actual innocence, and in making recommendations regarding policy changes.

#### **Relationship with Law Enforcement**

Building trust with our partners in law enforcement is imperative. In recent years, these relationships have become extremely fractured. There has been a lack of communication between our agencies, and I know first-hand that successful prosecution of cases can only occur if prosecutors and law enforcement are effectively working together. If appointed, I will convene a summit with law enforcement agencies across the county and begin a dialogue about issues affecting the safety of our community and proposals to more effectively hold dangerous criminals accountable to better protect our community. I will expect bureau and division chiefs in the office to have regular meetings with law enforcement.

#### **Transparency**

Transparency is critical to rebuilding trust with our community and taxpayers. I will engage regularly with the media, community leaders, and our partners at all levels of government. I will be a leader who is thoughtful, responsive, and measured when discussing items of interest with the public. The topics will include, when appropriate, high-profile cases, use of force by law enforcement, internal improvements made within the office, and other issues of importance to the legal system.

#### **Legal Advice to County Government**

I will ensure the tradition of providing responsive and sound legal advice to the board and county government. I will be engaged and present in the decisions and recommendations offered to county clients. County residents and employees must have confidence that county government is being advised responsibly and consistently. Attacks on our democracy will be dealt with swiftly and appropriately. I have provided additional details about this effort in question 2.

- 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 did not err and took appropriate action in certifying the 2020 election results. As a career prosecutor, I deal in evidence, truth, and facts. In the various ballot reviews, recounts, and completed and interim reports concerning the election, every outcome shows that Maricopa County administered a fair election with no evidence of tampering or fraud.

As a voting citizen and a candidate, I want to ensure elections results are accurate and trusted. I believe the actions taken by the Board have demonstrated the election results are accurate, and in doing so, created trust with the public that there is integrity in the election process in Maricopa County. If valid evidence is brought to me that demonstrates there was fraud or any other illegal improprieties with an election, I will act appropriately within my authority to enforce the law.

As someone who faced great national scrutiny regarding the handling of the Supreme Court appointment process of Brett Kavanaugh, I have a unique understanding of the dynamics that come with standing up for one's personal beliefs of right and wrong. If appointed County Attorney, the board will have a person who has demonstrated strength of character under tremendous public pressure and criticism. I will stand with the board in their continued efforts to ensure a person's right to a free and fair election process. I take the protection of our democracy seriously and if appointed, will make this a priority as your legal counsel.

- 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?**

The staffing shortages are not the product of a single cause so there will be multiple approaches to address these shortages.

#### **Engaged Leadership in Decision-making**

People must feel pride and accomplishment in their work, but the handling of protest cases and other negative/inaccurate media coverage of the office has greatly affected the morale of MCAO employees. To ensure I have a full understanding of decisions in high profile cases, I will be present and engaged in the case handling process. These cases will be evaluated through an incident review and formally staffed at the highest levels. When decisions are made, I will

address questions and explain to our community why a particular decision was made. My experience as a line prosecutor who has handled some of the most complex cases in the office will be critical in communicating to those inside and outside the office about the decisions that are made.

### **Assignment of Qualified Supervisors**

The first level of supervision is a bureau chief. That bureau chief must be a servant leader, trainer, subject matter expert, and mentor. When a bureau chief is frequently unavailable or disengaged, it leads to tremendous frustration, especially for younger attorneys. It can also lead to the mishandling of cases because of a lack of supervision and training. With the uncertainty of an election year, recruiting people to apply to be leaders in the organization has special challenges. I would like to discuss an idea with the Board related to promotions and its impact on merit protection to combat these challenges, and so I have the ability to recruit and appoint competent supervisors.

### **Ensuring Responsiveness to Employee Needs**

The needs of the office must prevail in how we assign prosecutors and other staff. But when a staff member makes a reasonable request for, e.g., a promotion opportunity or transfer, we must consider it in a timely fashion. We recently lost a very experienced attorney who was adept at handling complex cases because he had asked for the opportunity to apply for a promotion. This request went unanswered for many months and unfortunately, we lost this very experienced prosecutor to the private sector.

### **Addressing Mental Health Impacts on Employees**

Burnout is a costly reality; but it is a reality that can be combatted. Having firsthand knowledge of the issues and situations prosecutors and legal professionals face every day, I am keenly aware of the trauma and impact this work has on all staff. Employees and supervisors need to be trained to recognize signs of burnout early enough so they can be addressed. Employees need to be equipped with healthy ways of coping and addressing stress and trauma. As a leader in the office, I have often brought in professionals to speak to my bureau, and I believe there should be an office wide programmatic response and training to handle workplace stressors.

### **Improvement of the Hiring Process**

The County Attorney's Office hiring process is cumbersome and frustratingly slow. I would immediately review and revise the hiring process so that we do not lose the best candidates after they have interviewed. The allowance of conditional offers, streamlined yet robust background checks, and empowered hiring managers will address many of these issues.

### **Rigorous and Targeted Recruitment Campaign**

The staff shortage at the Maricopa County Attorney's Office has not been publicly addressed. I will immediately launch an aggressive recruitment campaign that will engage current employees, community partners, and targeted outreach to legal professionals. This office will focus recruitment on both new attorneys just graduating from law school, as well as seasoned

attorneys in other jurisdictions. We will look to technology to reach law students across the country and target states that have licensing reciprocity with Arizona as it relates to the practice of law. Seasoned attorneys do not want to take another bar exam late in their career and Arizona has the unique benefit of admitting attorneys on motion.

These tactics will provide targeted and effective recruitment for the office and will be useful in recruiting non-attorney personnel as well. Combined with an aggressive plan to speak to law students, college students, and other community groups, I expect to increase the pool of qualified applicants to MCAO.