



2026 District Attorney Interviews

Steve Kunzweiler

The Tulsa County Republican Party Candidate Support Committee conducted Tulsa County District Attorney candidate interviews on February 12 and February 17, 2026. Each candidate received the same questions.

Candidates did not know the questions before the interview, nor the responses of other candidates.

The committee gave 45 minutes to each candidate to speak on the record without interruption. Candidates were not directed on how long to answer each question. Each candidate was free to speak longer or shorter on particular questions as he or she saw fit. With the remaining time available after answering each question, each candidate had the opportunity to revisit previous questions or talk about new topics the committee did not ask. You will see those comments at the end of this document.

Each interview was conducted by a male and female interviewer asking each question. Other Candidate Support Committee members in the room remained silent during the 45 minutes. In a few instances, interviewers carefully asked follow-up questions to clarify the candidate’s comments or to address an angle to the issue that had been covered in earlier interviews. When these questions are in the transcript, they are surrounded by [brackets].

The text below faithfully presents the word-for-word responses from each candidate. The committee used accurate AI tools to both transcribe and gently “clean” incomplete or run-on sentences into complete sentences in the candidate’s own words. The committee used the same transcription process for each candidate without manual human subjectivity to faithfully convey each candidate’s presentation of these ideas to voters. The resulting transcripts are verified by human comparison to the original audio recordings.

For questions or comments about this interview, please contact candidates@tulsacountygop.org.

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Candidate's Political Philosophy, Family, & Business

**Do you identify as a conservative, moderate, or liberal?
Please explain what you mean by this distinction.**

Conservative.

I mean, I'm a constitutionally trained lawyer and prosecutor. I can tell you, just from an anecdotal example, when I came to the University of Tulsa's law school, it was kind of at the, I guess, advent of this idea of indoctrination.

I felt like I may have been one of the few law students in the class that actually kind of took issue with some of the instruction that was taking place. And at that point in time, the university—or Oral Roberts University Law School—shut down.

And so TU absorbed all those ORU law students. Suddenly, I have an influx of brothers and sisters. I'm like, "Oh, there's other people that think like I do."

And so it was a lot of fun. My two and a half years—it was supposed to be three years; I got through law school in two and a half—but I actually had people who understood the origins of our country like I did.

And so, from my perspective, I just say I focus primarily on what our Constitution says we ought to do, how we ought to be addressing our behavior as we serve our citizens.

Oklahoma is often called the “buckle of the Bible Belt,” and many voters will be interested to know if you attend church regularly. Please share with us the importance of faith in your life.

Sure. So I attend church on a weekly basis, every Sunday. I also attend several prayer groups. As a matter of fact, I do one every other Tuesday morning. I do a meeting on Thursdays called "That Man Is You," which is designed to get the attention of men and say, "Hey, you have a role in this world, especially with your families." Then every Friday morning, I do a prayer group with some other guys.

So I try to. I'm focusing on eternity. I'm not focusing on this life. I think if your orientation is towards God, I think if your orientation is towards His salvation message for us, then you have to be looking at eternity. This is a very temporary life. It's a drop in a bucket in a gargantuan sea.



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And so I think we're meant to serve each other. The only way I know to do that, as I've learned, is to go to church and to try and learn to be a better person every day.

We've talked about this before. I mean, we are all failed people on a planet that is struggling to figure out how do we get into communion with God, ultimately.

So it's—I'm a work in progress, as we all are, I think.

So thank you very much. I appreciate that.

What does your family think about you running for such a demanding position?

Let me answer that. That's a big question because, you know, when I first discovered what it meant to be a criminal prosecutor, I was in law school. I wanted to be a lawyer, but I didn't even know what criminal prosecution was.

And that may seem odd, but I'd never met a police officer before. I'd never been in a courtroom before. I'd only talked with a judge just briefly before I went to law school.

What I knew was what I saw on TV. You see police shows, but there really never was a focus on what the lawyers were doing. That came with time. Law & Order and some of these other shows came into play.

But when I first went to law school, I didn't even realize that was a thing until my wife took a job in Virginia as a small-animal veterinarian. As a matter of fact, we got engaged and we were married a thousand miles apart.

The plan was to live in Oklahoma, Missouri, or Texas. She took her first job out of vet school in Hampton, Virginia, and one of her clients was kind of the equivalent of the district attorney. They called them Commonwealth's Attorneys.

They said, "Sure, he can come and intern in our office." And when that happened, that was the very first day—it was June of '87—and that was when I was first really introduced to what it was that prosecutors do.

I remember looking at my wife in our apartment and saying, "I know exactly what I'm going to do."

Well, I think Christine thought she was marrying a lawyer, but she married a prosecutor, and I think there's a distinction.

It's always been hard because I've got a wife who's a small-animal veterinarian. We're both professional people working jobs, trying to raise three daughters. We were putting them through



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Christian education, so our kids weren't in public schools. We were saving money to pay for them to get a good Christian-based education.

And along the way, my wife and my girls ended up having to see what I was dealing with, and sometimes it's pretty bad.

I've had instances where a guy I prosecuted up in Nowata County showed up at our house while my wife was at home with our then three-year-old daughter. That guy confronted my wife and, as a matter of fact, kind of chased her around the yard a bit. She had to call the police out.

So it's real. I deal with real people committing real crimes, and my family unfortunately ends up being on some of the receiving end of that.

I've had an individual who sent a very threatening email during the case that involved Officer Betty Shelby, and it was personalized to my youngest daughter at the time, Jackie.

He basically was demanding that either your dad does his job, or the last words that you will hear will be branded on your chest: "Your dad didn't do his job."

You know, those kinds of threats I have to take seriously.

So, in answer to your question, it's a demanding job. Well, it's a real job, and it requires me to focus on not only protecting my community, but I also recognize that sometimes my job brings some of that action into our own personal lives.

So I worry about that. They worry about that. But they're supportive of me.

Yeah, I kind of answered the second part of that question—whether the time you spend and the way they spend their lives is different. Yeah, they've embraced it. It's very different, and they've embraced it.

Quite frankly, it's like being the spouse of a law-enforcement officer or the spouse of a firefighter. I'm not there facing people with guns like police officers are, but at the end of the day I am standing in a courtroom looking at somebody who murdered someone, and I'm trying to convince a jury that that guy needs to go to prison. And his entire family and his friends are not liking what's coming out of my mouth.

So it does have its challenges, but if we didn't have people doing this job, then we would have problems in our community. So I'm honored to be able to do the job.

Does your family share your views and values?

Absolutely.



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[Okay. And your spouse?]

Yes. Yes. She will be a saint one day.

How will your business be affected by your candidacy and possible term or terms in office?

Well, I'm currently the elected district attorney, so I'm in. As I said before, it's a true honor to have the trust of the citizens of Tulsa County. They placed that confidence in me back in 2015 when Tim Harris retired, and they have continued to place that trust in me. I'm hoping to continue to earn that trust and do this job for another four years.

Prosecutorial Discretion

Should the District Attorney base detention and supervision decisions on biological sex rather than gender identity when safety is at risk?

You might need to restate that because I guess what I would tell you is I do not make any differentiation on the person that's coming into the courts.

If they are the victim of a crime, I'm not looking at race. I'm not looking at gender. I'm not looking at color. I'm looking literally at: Is this person a victim of a crime?

Well, it's the same thing when I'm doing a charging decision. I'm not paying attention to that. Our law is in place to protect a human person. Whatever that human person chooses to do with their life, and whatever choices they're going to make, my job is this: if they're committing a crime, then I'm going to hold them accountable for that crime.

If they're the victim of a crime, then I'm going to try and hold the person responsible for the commission of that crime accountable for it.

So, you know, it's a fairly simple job. Black is black. White is white. Break the law, there's going to be a consequence.

I'm not sure what that consequence will be. It just depends. It depends on the severity of the crime and maybe some of the history of the offender.



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[And males are put in male prisons and women are put in women's prisons, correct?]

A man is a man and a woman is a woman. I don't think that's in dispute.

[There are some DAs in other cities that mess with that distinction.]

Well, I'm not going to argue with biology or science.

Should prosecutors share all the evidence in a case, unless doing so would break the law or put someone in danger?

Yeah. In Oklahoma, we have the Oklahoma Criminal Discovery Code that mandates that we turn over what we have in our files.

Now, there's going to be attorney work product, so we're not going to turn that kind of stuff over—our thought processes as we're thinking about how we're going to handle a particular case.

But if it is any evidence that one may, could, or possibly introduce into the case, we turn it over.

That information—police reports, statements from witnesses—we make available through the property room at the Tulsa Police Department or the Sheriff's Office if they want to inspect that.

As a matter of fact, I've got a guy today who's in my office. Regrettably, he's representing a defendant who's charged with possession of child pornography. So we have to make a way to keep that from getting out into his personal hands because we can't duplicate child pornography.

But he has the right to be able to look at it and see what his client is actually going to be facing.

In addition to that, the law mandates that if we have what we call Brady-Giglio evidence—and those are two United States Supreme Court cases—anything that would tend to exculpate or exonerate a particular defendant, we are not at liberty to hide the ball on that.

And then the Giglio aspect of that is if there's anything that might involve the credibility of a particular law-enforcement officer who's going to testify.

So, for instance, if there was something that involved an officer that may have done something that would call into question their honesty, then what we are obligated to do is say, "Here's this evidence."

Now, sometimes that may not be admissible in court, but you turn that over to the defense and then you have a judge make a ruling on whether that particular information is admissible or not.

I often say that if you and I are playing poker—let's say five-card draw or something like that—you can hide your cards from me if you're the defense attorney. You're looking at all my cards. You know exactly what's in my hand.



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And I'm basically saying, "That's my hand, and I believe that hand is good enough to find you guilty beyond a reasonable doubt." So there's no hiding the ball. We share everything.

Prosecutors, by law—well, actually, if you looked at the code of ethics—it refers to us as ministers of justice. It doesn't say we're advocates for the state. We are looked upon to make sure that justice prevails.

So if I'm ever involved in a case where somebody is charged with a particular crime, and I come across evidence that makes me think this person may not have actually done the crime, then I'm just as duty-bound to make every effort to turn that information over or exonerate that person.

That obligation, from beginning to end, is upon me.

Even post-conviction, if something comes to my attention that I did not know about, and it would shed light on the fact that this particular person was wrongfully convicted, I am duty-bound by my ethics to come back and help clear that person's record.

Should the District Attorney focus the office's time and resources first on violent crimes like murder, rape, and child abuse, as opposed to lower-level, non-violent cases?

I make no distinction. Individuals are running afoul of the law. I don't get to pick and choose which particular crimes I'm going to prosecute or not prosecute.

Now, there are occasions in which it could be handled by a municipal court of law, but let's say you're a victim of a larceny. Let's say you're a business owner and somebody steals something from your business.

Well, it's not in my purview to say, "Well, that's a nonviolent crime and I really don't care about that. I have to focus my attention on violent crimes." That is not the job of a district attorney.

A district attorney's job is to enforce the law based on evidence. When applied to the law, do I have a reasonable expectation that this particular person committed that crime? And do I believe that a judge or jury would find that person guilty?

Now, how do I handle those kinds of cases in my office? It's simple.

If I separate out the crimes—and the perpetrators—that we're all afraid of from the perpetrators of crimes we're frustrated with, there is a distinction.



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Murders, rapes, robberies, child abuse, shootings with intent to kill—those kinds of crimes—those are crimes that every single person in our community would easily say, "I'm afraid of those people. Get them off the streets."

The other crimes are no less important, but I have to recognize that, with this particular category of people, there's probably less of a likelihood that they may be sentenced to incarceration upon their first offense.

If you're pointing a gun at somebody and shooting them, you're going to prison.

If you're molesting a child, you should be going to prison.

If you may be involved in something like withholding stolen property, and it's a first-time offense, then I'm going to try and figure out: How do I correct the misapprehension that you have that makes you think that's okay?

That's a defect in reasoning in that person.

How do I get you reoriented to the idea that, one, we don't steal property, and two, we don't keep other people's property from them?

So you take a look at those cases on an individual basis, and then you handle those cases.

Those cases tend to be very aggravating because they involve a lot of people who have substance-abuse issues, alcohol-abuse issues, and sometimes mental-health issues.

So you're trying to, one, get them cleaned up from their addiction issues or mental-health issues, and then you're trying to say, "All right, now how do we keep you from doing this again?"

So I'm not going to draw a distinction in enforcement. A crime is a crime, and I'll enforce it.

When a criminal case has been bound over for trial, should the District Attorney always put the crime victim's interests ahead of the defendant and activist groups when making decisions?

Well, Oklahoma is a Marsy's Law state, so that was passed maybe ten years ago, I think, or maybe less than that. But it is a constitutional amendment to the Oklahoma Constitution. We already had it in statute, but now it's a part of the state's constitution—Article II, Section 34—that mandates the rights of victims.



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So, you know, we need to make sure the voices of victims are heard. Now, if they were to come in and say, "I want the death penalty for this guy who broke into my house," okay, well, that might tell me what your temperature is about the particular crime, but I'm not going to be trying to pursue a punishment that is irrational for the nature of the crime.

And more to your point, activist groups may come in and try to say, "Well, you know, you need to treat this particular person or this particular population differently than you do anybody else." I am not going to draw any distinction from that.

Oklahoma has a couple of crimes out there where, out of necessity, you may have to actually look at a person's status. It doesn't happen often, but when it does, if somebody is committing a crime because of that person's ethnicity, or their religion, or their skin color, we call that Oklahoma malicious intimidation. Some people call it a hate crime.

Yeah, I mean, if somebody's targeting a person because of their faith, then I'm going to prosecute that particular person and hold them accountable under the Oklahoma standard for that type of crime.

But separating out subsets or categories of victims or defendants, you're going down a very slippery slope of losing your focus. The job is really quite simple: Was a crime committed? Do I have a reasonable expectation, based upon the reports I have in front of me, that a judge or jury can find this particular person guilty? That generally involves nothing to do with a person's race, color, or advocacy.

Should the District Attorney always support police and deputies who act in good faith, while holding them accountable when they make a mistake?

Okay. So when I pick a jury, one of the things I talk about with jurors is that it's a natural inclination. Generally speaking, most people will respect law enforcement, right? Most people. There are going to be some folks who've had run-ins and have had bad experiences. I mean, you may have been pulled over by a police officer who's having a really bad day, and it might paint your view of police officers.

So when I'm picking a jury, I often will ask them: Do you think that if a person has a particular title, that automatically makes them more believable?

Sometimes I'm calling a medical examiner to testify about the death of a human being, or I'm calling a doctor. They can come in wearing their scrubs, they can come in with a stethoscope, and people might want to say, "Well, there's a doctor. I mean, I'm going to believe them."

And what I tell them is that, under Oklahoma law—actually, under the law across this country—a juror gets to determine how much weight and credibility they give to any particular witness. Just because they have a title or they have initials behind their name doesn't mean they're any more special.



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Now, while I respect and work with law enforcement all the time, my job, independently of law enforcement, is to make sure they stay within their lane and present me relevant information, and I stay within my lane and present that lawful information before a court under the rules of law.

So I support and work pretty much consistently with law enforcement. But there have been occasions in which I've had to make very difficult decisions that may run counter to the opinions of a particular law enforcement agency. They may not like me for that, but the job of being a district attorney requires objectivity.

It's easy to maybe think that we're always on the same side, but that's not the job. The job is to protect the rule of law and to advance public safety.

So I've been involved in cases where I've unfortunately had to prosecute members of law enforcement or members of any other profession. It's not easy when you're charging some doctor with a crime. It's not easy when you're charging some police officer with a crime. People can be very passionate about their feelings on that.

But, like I said in answer to your earlier question, a particular subset of people is not going to dictate how a district attorney ought to handle a case. A district attorney should be looking at it very objectively.

Budget

Tulsa County's District Attorney's Office has dozens of prosecutors, support staff, and a multi-million-dollar budget. If resources are limited, which approach should the District Attorney choose?

- A. Put most staff time and money toward violent crimes, even if lower-level cases are delayed or dismissed.**
- B. Spread staff and money evenly across all cases, even if violent cases take longer.**
- C. Shift more staff time and money toward programs and policy work, even if fewer violent crimes are prosecuted.**

That's a really good question.

So, the fun part of that question is we're already understaffed and we're underpaid. You can look at any other jurisdiction across this country, and you would readily realize that, for whatever reason, in this state—and there are other states that are like this—they recognize that you should have a larger staff.



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A comparable jurisdiction would be Albuquerque. Tulsa County is approaching 700,000 people. I think the population of Albuquerque is about 700,000 people, somewhere in that range. Their office has 200 people working in it, and out of those 200 people, 100 are attorneys.

Okay. Well, all right. People are people, and crime is crime, right? I'm not going to say, "Wow, they are more violent than we are." People are people, and crime is crime.

In Tulsa County, my staff is 125 people, and about 55 of those people are lawyers. I don't have a budget beyond that to do that job. So I have to live within the means that have been provided to me.

I'd love to have the type of staffing that Albuquerque has. Or take the Bronx, New York. I think their population is 2.1 million. Just divide that by a third, right, and you can calculate it. Their staff is 600 people. It's almost the same ratio as Albuquerque.

It's like, all right, if those are citizens of the United States, and Bronx citizens are citizens of the United States, then why are Oklahoma citizens somehow less?

Okay, back to the point. At the end of the day, my job is public safety. So I will guarantee you that I'm going to put the best prosecutors on the hardest crimes. That's just plain good management.

I am not going to put some rookie prosecutor handling a murder case or some child abuse case. I'm going to put my most experienced people on the most violent crimes so I can make sure my community doesn't have to worry about somebody who's going to get out of jail and then go out and re-victimize people.

You know, I have that obligation. But at the same time, I have the duty and the obligation to make sure my people are competently trained and go after the people who commit particular crimes.

So it's a bit of a juggle. But if you're going to ask me where I'm going to place my resources, I am always going to default to public safety.

It's like real estate. What's the number one rule of real estate? Location, location, location.

What's the number one rule of prosecution? Public safety, public safety, public safety.

Now, if somebody's committing a misdemeanor DUI, that's a public safety issue to me. Somebody who is driving down the street and the police are chasing them and they're eluding them—that's a public safety issue.

So I can find those crimes where, as my wife says, the crimes she cares about the most are the ones where she asks, "Could my family be directly impacted? Could my kid get hurt by that crime?"

It gets harder when you're talking with the business community because they are just as victimized. Their property is being fleeced, and you've got people coming in.



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Some businesses—I disagree with their perspective—will allow people to come in and strip their stores, and they won't report it to the police.

Well, I mean, it's the Rudy Giuliani perspective: broken windows have consequences. Let's figure out where the broken windows are and go after those bad actors.

So, you know, sometimes you can go after the people who are breaking windows and stealing property, but we need the cooperation of our entire community to do that, right?

McGirt

How does the McGirt vs. Oklahoma decision impact your job as Tulsa County DA, and how do you plan to deal with any complications?

So yeah, obviously that was a seismic shift at the time that decision came down, and I knew it and could see it coming.

Because what was being suggested at the outset was that if you were a Native American, either as a defendant or as a victim, if there was a Native American involved in the case, the state no longer had jurisdiction over those crimes. That's really how McGirt was originally ruled upon.

So it necessarily created what I would say was chaos, because at that point the tribes—either the Cherokee or the Muscogee—they had their tribal courts, but we were handling the overwhelming majority of all those types of crimes.

So if you found out you were having to train police officers and say—this is the first time in my entire life where race became an issue—you would have an officer pulling somebody over, and instead of getting basic information, they had to ask, “Are you a member of an Indian tribe?” And if they said yes, then it would divert to a tribe or divert to the FBI, because the state didn't have jurisdiction on that.

Now since that decision, we had a case out of Tulsa County—Tulsa County is pretty much led on this particular issue—the Castro-Huerta United States Supreme Court case.

And in that case, the challenge was you had a Hispanic man who was victimizing a Native American woman and her child, and the Hispanic man was claiming that he should not be held accountable because McGirt applied.

Well, at the time one would think, “Okay, yes,” but we took that up to the United States Supreme Court to say he's not a member of a tribe, and the whole concept of tribal courts and tribal sovereignty



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is to protect their citizens using their customs and hold them accountable under their rules of law. And I think that's fine.

But here was a guy basically trying to say, "I get a get-out-of-jail-free card because you should be prosecuting me in another jurisdiction."

Well, Castro-Huerta says no: if you are not even a member of a tribe and you're committing a crime in Indian Country, the state has jurisdiction.

Since that time, we've now had a ruling out of the federal court here in Tulsa County, where Judge Greg Frizzell ruled that because Tulsa County is split between Cherokee and Muscogee Nation, it raised the next question:

What if you're a citizen of the Osage Nation and you're driving drunk through Tulsa? You're not a member of the Cherokee Nation, you're not a member of the Muscogee Nation—should the State of Oklahoma be able to prosecute that person just like it would if they were a citizen of Kansas or some other jurisdiction?

Our argument is: if you're not a member of the tribe on whose reservation the crime was committed, then the state should have jurisdiction. It's not a sovereignty issue in that respect, even though a lot of people think it is.

We are not trying to take away the sovereignty of the Muscogee or Cherokee Nation. What I'm simply advocating is that we are all Oklahomans, and if the state has jurisdiction to enforce its laws, it ought to be allowed to do that.

The Cherokee Nation or the Muscogee Nation can also choose to prosecute, and a lot of folks don't understand that. But, for example, if you're familiar with the Chiefsaholic case—this Kansas City Chiefs superfan—he was prosecuted for robbing a bank in Bixby. We charged him in Tulsa in state court, and the federal government charged him in federal court for the exact same crime. And there is no double jeopardy between federal prosecution under federal law and state prosecution under state law for the same facts.

The same concept holds true for the tribes. If I'm prosecuting somebody over whom I have jurisdiction, I'm not depriving the tribe of also charging that person under their code. They can do that as well, and I'm fine with it. I'm actually glad they would also help hold that person accountable.

So it's not about taking away sovereignty. It's literally that the state would like to continue prosecuting cases it has had jurisdiction over since 1907.

So the chaos has been moved out of the McGirt issue—it seems to be. It begins to look like a big funnel at the beginning, where everything is pouring in.



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But as the courts now start assessing and looking at what McGirt really meant, the Supreme Court had to say, "Well, not exactly." We're not going to say that a Hispanic person or somebody from another nation or culture gets the exemption that tribal members do.

So now the scope is narrowing quite a bit into more isolated issues.

Can I prosecute an Indian man for committing a crime on an Indian reservation? No—if he is Cherokee committing a crime in Cherokee Nation, that's either tribal or federal jurisdiction, and I'm totally fine with that.

The question involves people who are not members of those tribes committing crimes in that same location.

National Issues

Please give an example of a nationally high-profile case where you think the local district attorney handled the politically-charged situation well, and why.

So I've been in this office since 2002, so I can speak to myself primarily.

And I would say the case that it would actually go back to is a case that I prosecuted alongside Doug Drummond under Tim Harris. We had what was called the Good Friday murders, and that was a terrible instance in which two white guys, Jacob England and Alvin Watts, decided that they were just going to shoot black people.

So they started driving around parts of Tulsa, and if they saw a black person, they started shooting, and they killed two or three people and wounded two or three other people. It was terrible.

Mr. Harris at that time had a great relationship with the churches in the Black community, and he knew immediately when that thing was going down to pick up the phone—because he was a Christian man—and call those pastors.

And he said, "I just want to let you know we're aware of what's happening, and here's how we're going to handle it." And he made sure those pastors could say to their congregation, "I spoke with the DA, and the DA has conveyed to me how this is going to be handled."

You can't do that unless you have a relationship with a particular community—whether it's Black or Hispanic or any community. If you have zero relationship, you're not going to be able to pick up the phone and make those calls.



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And then you will end up seeing terrible things like what happened in Detroit, Michigan, or other places where things are coming apart at the seams.

I learned from Mr. Harris at that time—I was the chief of the criminal division—but I learned from him the value of making sure you have relationships.

So I continued to maintain the relationships Mr. Harris had, and of course that carried forward.

I had to deal with the Betty Shelby case, in which Terence Crutcher was shot—a white police officer and a Black victim—and I had to try to navigate that. And I thank Mr. Harris for his leadership in teaching me how to actually be a prosecutor.

When I left the Washington County DA's office, I was the first assistant, and the reason I came to work here in Tulsa County was Mr. Harris. I came to his office. He knew I was a first assistant, and he said, "Why are you leaving a good job?"

And I said, "Because I want to work for you. I want to work for you."

So I owe a great deal of credit, and I will say that particular case is one that really galvanized in me the value of having relationships with all citizens in your community.

Do you support HJB 1040 banning sharia law in Oklahoma and/or SB1762 requiring all courts that no legal precept from a foreign government or law can supersede our Constitution? Why or why not?

I am sworn to uphold and defend the laws of the United States of America and its Constitution, and the laws of the State of Oklahoma and its Constitution.

There is nothing about any foreign law that I am sworn to uphold, until the people tell me to amend the Constitution and one of these things changes.

And what you will find is that district attorneys, our job is to uphold and defend the constitutional laws of our great country and our great state.

And, you know, the idea that somehow we can have a foreign law applied to us is repugnant to me. You're either an American citizen or you're not.



Closing Statements

Please tell voters what you would change and what you would keep the same if elected District Attorney of Tulsa County, and what your top priorities would be on day one.

Well, I've been a DA since 2015, and what I would say is, to me, the way I characterize this question is: what are you going to focus on?

Well, I can tell you this—we have a crisis with regard to fentanyl. Our federal government has allowed a porous border in which we have had countless individuals come into this country and literally set up shop and set up their drug cartels within our borders.

And because of that, now we have these large quantities of methamphetamine, heroin, and fentanyl coming into our jurisdictions.

So I have to pivot and say, "All right, we've got to target this fentanyl issue."

And I can tell you, just recently we caught a gal who had I think like 50 pounds of fentanyl. And I don't know what that would equate to, but I'm pretty sure it would kill every single person in the state of Oklahoma if they had access to or touched even a small quantity of that.

So the priority has to be trying to prosecute individuals who are possessing and trafficking, possessing with intent, and distributing and trafficking in fentanyl.

As a matter of fact, we just tried a case this week in which we put somebody down for I think 12 or 15 years for trafficking in fentanyl. And I know my community is upset about it, and I'm upset about it, and I'm trying to stem that tide.

Secondarily, I can tell you this: simply the infrastructure of our state when it comes to the care of the mentally ill is abhorrent.

I am a conservative Christian man and a conservative Republican, but that does not mean I am without compassion. That's the thing that runs through me, because people say you're Republican and somehow they think you have zero compassion.

We were the ones that figured out how to overcome slavery and outlaw it. Republicans were doing that, not Democrats. We are the compassionate party.

And so we have a duty and obligation to the most vulnerable in our state and in our community.

And so if somebody has a mental illness, that's not because they chose to have that. And I'm the father of a mentally ill daughter.



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I have yet to meet a single person who is mentally ill who says, "Yeah, I think I'd like to be." I've yet to meet any person who says, "Of all the things that could happen to me, I choose to be mentally ill. Nobody wants to be mentally ill, because the stigma is terrible and the recovery is so hard, and just trying to survive with that affliction is extremely difficult.

It is not their fault. And yet our state, for the last 30 years—back when I was a young prosecutor—I felt like the state of mental health care was better than it is today.

Now we are trying to rebuild that infrastructure, but we did a terrible job over the last three decades allowing it to deteriorate.

And I would venture to say, even in this room, if I asked the question, "Do you know somebody who is mentally ill?" I bet every one of you would raise your hand—either a family member, a friend, or a neighbor.

And the only reason that is true is because we've allowed it to happen. We could have done a better job over time.

So I'm focused on that—not just because I have a daughter in that situation, but because it is such a visible aspect of my family's life, and we don't shy away from it.

And so I'm holding that system accountable.

And third, I think we have a terrible problem with youth crime, and in particular violent youth crime.

That is an outgrowth of a number of factors, including a lack of available detention facilities that are safe enough to hold these violent offenders accountable.

We need to beef that system up. These young people are starting to carry guns, and you can see it.

Tulsa even had to pass a curfew because there were shootings downtown during Juneteenth, with people being shot in the streets by youth carrying guns.

We need the capacity to hold some of these violent offenders, and right now we don't have the capacity in Tulsa County or even in the state to hold the people we really need to hold and keep in a safe place on a day-to-day basis.

Unfortunately, my judges are having to make really "Sophie's choice" type decisions—do I let the person who molested a little sister out, or do I let the person who shot up a house out?

We've got two people competing for the same bed, and that shouldn't be happening.



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Do you have any additional thoughts on the questions we asked, or about any other topics we have not covered today?

Well, I'm just honored to be the district attorney of this jurisdiction. It's a blessing.

My wife Christine is a small animal veterinarian, and the reason I'm here, to be honest with you, is that when Christine had internships at the University of Missouri, I would drive her to her internships.

I drove her from St. Louis all the way out to Santa Barbara, California. We drove to Tulsa. I drove her from St. Louis all the way down to Houston. We drove through Tulsa.

She had an internship in Dallas. I drove her all the way from St. Louis down to Dallas.

Every time we went through Tulsa, we both just said, "Man, this might be a really nice community to live in."

So I applied to a lot of different law schools. I got accepted to a lot of different law schools, but at the end, through God's providence, TU accepted me.

And I thought, "I think this would be a place I would like to raise my family."

Even though my wife went out to Virginia, I was like, "Christine, if I pass the bar exam, we've got to live in Oklahoma. I want to live in Tulsa."

And so I think Tulsa is the shining light on the hill for the rest of this country. There is something special about this state, and there is something special about this city.

And I will fight to my dying day to protect these citizens. It has been my honor and my privilege to do that, and I hope to gain their trust once again.