

## CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please return your email response to [besmith@tri-statedefender.com](mailto:besmith@tri-statedefender.com))

### Vision and Plans

*What is your vision for Memphis?*

*The vision I have for Memphis and Shelby County is for it to be a place where people will want to live and raise their families in safety and peace.*

*What is your platform or plan of action for the office that you are seeking? What do you want to ACCOMPLISH while in office and what problems must be addressed in order to achieve those goals and objectives?*

*\*I will continue collaboration with Federal, State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies to attack crime.*

*\*I will continue working with neighborhood, civic and faith based leaders to make Shelby County as safe as possible.*

*\* I will have an open and transparent operational philosophy to protect the public trust.*

*\* The Sheriff's Office will be accountable to the citizens of the community.*

*\* The Sheriff's Office will be fiscally responsible as good stewards of taxpayer dollars and explore potential grant funding to save tax payer dollars. We will utilize innovative approaches to contain costs.*

*\* We will maintain accreditation for our jail system and law enforcement teams through national accrediting bodies.*

*How do you plan to address the issues listed above through the office you desire to hold?*

*I plan to address the above issues by leading the Sheriff's Office with integrity and accountability. I would also seek out highly qualified individuals who have demonstrated their*

*integrity and professionalism to be members of my command staff. I would share my vision with them and ask for their input in establishing goals and objectives, matching our shared vision and consistent with the requirements of The American Correctional Association and The Committee on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, our two National Accrediting Association. This would foster team building and buy in, by the executive staff. Accountability with benchmarks and time lines would be established and in our weekly Staff Meetings progress reports would be given to keep the agency on track.*

*This Business Model has made us, and will continue to make us, a highly effective and efficient law enforcement agency.*

## **Qualifications and Experience**

*Why are you running for elected office?*

*When Sheriff Mark H. Luttrell, Jr. made the sudden choice to seek the Office of Shelby County Mayor, my family and I had an important decision to make about our future, and the future of the Shelby County Sheriff's Office. Part of my decision was based on a sense of loyalty to the men and women of the Sheriff's Office who have supported our agenda of change and played a major role in making our agency a professional and nationally accredited organization. The other part of my decision was based on my belief that I am the most qualified candidate and that my experience as Chief Deputy of the Shelby County Sheriff's Office and as a Deputy Chief, Deputy Director and Director of the Memphis Police Department has prepared me to seek election to the Office of Sheriff of Shelby County.*

*What makes you qualified for holding an office? What previous experience lends itself to success in the office? What have you accomplished?*

*I have over 34 years of experience in law enforcement. For the past 7 1/2 years I have served as the Chief Deputy of the Shelby County Sheriff's Office. Prior to that, I served for over 27 years with the Memphis Police Department, where I rose through the ranks from patrolman to Director. From 1991 until the end of 1999, I served on the Senior Command Staff of the MPD, first as a Deputy Chief, then as Deputy Director and finally as Director. During my 7 1/2 years as Chief Deputy I have been part of the Command Team that has brought professionalism, effectiveness and National Accreditation to our Jail and the Law Enforcement Division of the SCSO. For these reasons I believe I am qualified to seek the Office of Sheriff of Shelby County.*

*Who has endorsed or expressed support for your candidacy?*

*Current employees of the Sheriff's Office too numerous to name. Current and retired colleagues from the Memphis Police Department and Sheriff's Office. (Please see my website) Last week the nonpartisan Coalition for a Better Memphis rated me the top Sheriff's Candidate regardless of party. This week the Commercial Appeal Editorial Board endorsed me in the Republican Primary.*

### **Ability to Implement Initiatives**

*A clear vision and a plan for the future are important, but it means nothing if a candidate does not have the ability to get anything accomplished.*

*How would you tackle the issues identified as critical for the city/county from the seat you are seeking?*

*Violent crime and recidivism are still serious issues in our community. As Sheriff I will continue to work with all our Local, State and Federal Law Enforcement Partners in addressing our violent crime problem. We will continue to participate in the various task forces whose mission it is to address violent crime, narcotics, street crimes, organized crime and gangs. Identifying our most violent offenders and targeting them with all of our resources to arrest them and successfully prosecute them for their crimes. We will use all of our tools to accomplish this mission and anytime we can take the cases to Federal Prosecutors for possible prosecution under Federal Statutes which could result in conviction in the Federal System resulting in tougher sentencing standards, we will. Law enforcement can not arrest ourselves out of our crime problem, therefore, I fully support Operation Safe Community and its Fifteen Strategies designed to make our community one of the safest communities of our size in the county. I believe in the holistic approach of Operation Safe Community and believe that we must take every opportunity to involve neighborhood groups, faith based groups, civic groups and corporate Memphis and Shelby County in our efforts to make our community one where people want to locate their companies, educate their children and raise their families. As a native Memphian, I have observed the people of Shelby County and Mid Southerners respond to numerous tragedies and disasters with their money, skills, time and talents. We need that compassion now in support of Operation Safe Community. I have been a public servant my entire adult life. I have raised my family here. I believe in Memphis and Shelby County. I have been a volunteer coach and mentor for young men and women and know I have made a difference in their lives. I will encourage others to volunteer their time and skill to help save as many young men and women as possible. To make our community the great place it can be for all of us.*

*What opportunities do you see in working with other cities and counties in the metro area and how do you define your role in government and the overall role of government?*

*I have been a member of the Memphis Metropolitan Association of Chiefs of Police since 1988. This Association has police executives from local, state and federal agencies in its membership. The executives come from Shelby, Tipton and Fayette Counties in Tennessee, Desoto County Mississippi and Crittenden County Arkansas. I was elected to serve in the following leadership positions of the association; secretary/treasurer, vice president and president . As the Academy Commander of the Memphis Police Department, I also served as Training Liaison to the Post Commission to Tennessee for the Association.*

*As Sheriff I will continue to work with the MMACP and serve as a leader The Shelby County Sheriff's Office will continue to collaborate with the various organizations and serve as a resource to them.*

*How would you go about building consensus or support to accomplish goals?*

*I would continue fostering the relationships I have built over the years with the membership of the Memphis Metropolitan Association of Chiefs of Police. The organization was formed to have the executives of the law enforcement community work together to address the crime problem that impacts all of our communities, build relationships, share "Best Practice" concepts and training opportunities.*

*Would you demonstrate the integrity and fortitude to stand on principle to accomplish an important objective despite opposition or lack of popularity for an idea? Give an example. Provide past examples of experiences you had where that was the case?*

*Yes, I have demonstrated this practice throughout my career. I have called for audits and called in the FBI to protect the public trust. I have assisted in investigating corrupt law enforcement officers and ordered their arrest when warranted. I have ordered administrative investigations into allegations of misconduct that have resulted in charges against officers leading to their termination. No other candidate has had to make these tough but necessary decisions.*

