

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please return your email response to besmith@tri-statedefender.com)

Vision and Plans

What is your vision for Memphis?

I wish to see Memphis live up to its potential and justify the love many of us have for this city. We have assets we should be proud of in terms of music, the river and our people. Our location is an asset in terms of the national logistical picture. However, to be 'One Memphis', which is an excellent goal, we must work together to address the current severe disparities in the living standards of our population. Sensitivity on the part of all of our elected leadership is necessary but does not yet exist. I believe we are now progressing but we must address crime and better educate our youth in order to attract jobs, grow local businesses and build our economy. We cannot anticipate survival if citizens, particularly young professionals, continue to leave the city by choice or for employment reasons. Our local governments do not need to fuel development that doesn't provide benefit to the majority of our citizens in the long run. Both mayors have recently proposed programs which are small steps toward some of our needs. Mayor Wharton is emphasizing financial literacy and bank reinvestment in the community, and Mayor Ford has proposed a program to help guide and development businesses owned by women. In order to fund all the necessities for moving the City ahead, sufficient funds have to be available in the governmental budgets, therefore efficiencies must be found since our tax burdens are high enough. I believe there are numerous opportunities for efficiencies in our present governments, with or without 'consolidation' but our governments must be responsive, innovative and learn to do more with less.

*What is your platform or plan of action for the office that your 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 was appointed interim Trustee on 9/28/09 by the County Commission following the passing of Trustee Paul Mattila and have already succeeded in the first 6 months in making numerous changes and improvements which I believe benefit all the citizens of Memphis and Shelby County. Innovation allows the Trustee to do more with less. The Trustee handles the County's tax collections (over \$650 million) and banking (investing \$500 million) and also collects taxes for most of the smaller municipalities in the County. In my first 6 months:

- Trustee office operating expenses were reduced
- We have been truly negotiating with the City of Memphis to collect property taxes for the City which would save City taxpayers over \$2.5 million per year.

- The use of the award-winning payment kiosks was increased from 8 which were primarily in the suburbs to 15 throughout Memphis and Shelby County giving more coverage and convenience to all the citizens
- A highly successful new program was implemented sending mobile cashiers across the County during tax season for the convenience of citizens, thereby reducing the need for many taxpayers and senior citizens to come downtown while also reducing the downtown office lines and workload. Included in the mobile cashiering locations were community centers and senior centers in the inner city as well as public libraries and a church
- Public access to the Trustee's financial information was increased by publishing mon lineports online
- Information on tax relief and tax freeze programs was presented to thousands of senior citizens, disabled citizens and veterans including at most of Memphis' senior/community centers. For each person applying for and receiving tax relief, more money is transferred from the State to our County.
- Greater emphasis was placed by me on assuring compliance by taxpayers with PILOT agreements and more taxes were collected due to that effort
- We have already collected over \$35 million dollars more than the County anticipated for the entire fiscal year which ends June 30th
- The Trustee's office was made more employee-friendly
- We have begun test usage of a 'virtual vault' which we believe will assist other County offices in the securing and accounting for cash, while providing immediate crediting at the bank
- I have assured that the Trustee's office utilizes minority-owned businesses, such as Tri-State Bank, wherever possible.

I would like to continue the technological innovations in the office, such as the kiosk and mobile cashiering programs to provide more convenience to taxpayers at less cost, and implement the use of ACH refunding to decrease workload and operating expenses. I would like to continue the restructuring of the office with regard to personnel usage and use technology to allow for job sharing and work-from-home programs for specific personnel, thereby further decreasing operating expenses and providing more opportunities for different types of employment for which more citizens may qualify. I would like to conclude successful negotiations with the City of Memphis to collect Memphis' taxes as the Trustee currently does for the other municipalities. As to the problems to be addressed to accomplish these things, budget approval would have to be sought for any initiative which initially costs money. However, I anticipate definable savings/efficiencies from all the initiatives.

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

See above explanation.

Qualifications and Experience

Why are you running for elected office?

I was asked by many people to serve as interim Trustee after Mr. Mattila's death due to my prior experience and work history. Although I was not already employed in the Trustee's office, I had the experience necessary to successfully obtain the appointment by a unanimous vote of the County Commission and successfully run the office. I had advised the Commissioners that if I were appointed I would run for election. I have been very pleased with the success of the changes in the office so far and I want to continue to make a difference.

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

I have extensive professional experience in government, tax collection, finance, administration, personnel management and law. I am a life-long Democrat, who has volunteered countless hours for community, political and social causes to bring about what I believe has been improvement.

I spent 9 years with the City of Memphis, beginning in Community Development in 1978, at the time that many of the City's community centers were built. I learned much about the city, the diversity of the residents, and the problems and needs of Memphians by working with people in the community on the projects being done: community centers, senior centers, parks, etc. I worked with the people/groups who received Community Development Action Grants, was involved with the Beale Street revitalization and remained with the City until 1987, eventually becoming Assistant Treasurer for those last three years. The City Treasurer's office performs the same property tax collection function for the City that the Trustee performs for Shelby County. While serving as Assistant City Treasurer, I implemented procedures which brought collection percentages to their highest points ever at that time, while reducing operating expenses.

My experience with City government taught me about the needs and concerns of Memphians and that knowledge still impacts my thinking today – from the needs of the people who received help in their neighborhoods to the management of the City's tax base. It is vitally important that every government official know the community, people and government of the area he/she is serving, not just the needs of one group.

In 1987, Governor Ned McWherter's administration asked me to join the Tennessee Department of Revenue where I assisted the Commissioner in researching revenue sources and implementing tax collection procedures for the State., then the Department of Youth Development (formed in 1989). I was asked to serve as Personnel Director for the department which ended up having 1200 employees. I participated in the Governor's "Listening to Tennessee" tours across the state, and

learned that all Tennesseans believe their government should be responsive. While working full-time, I attended law school at night. In 1994, I graduated, became an attorney and returned to Memphis to serve this community. My private practice was in the area of civil trial law. I have run a business and served individual clients, as well as large and small businesses in Memphis for 15 years.

Since 1979, I have been involved with organizations working for the betterment of this community. Off the job, I have worked with some of the primary civil rights leaders in Memphis in their organizations/efforts on behalf of the community for many years, to bring more diverse political leadership to Memphis, Shelby County, and Tennessee – not only racially diverse but for women as well. I was one of the founders of Women in the Political Process and served as board member and treasurer in the early 1980's, as well as on Memphis Public Affairs Council and producing a cable TV program for a women's group. I remain involved in political and women's groups to try to move the community forward. I have met, befriended and worked with many fine, hard-working, honest people who have become leaders in this county and this state because of their work ethic, intelligence and commitment to fairness. It is my experiences with those people that I would hope will always influence my actions. It was my friendship with many of those people which led to my desire to become an attorney I also consider it a privilege to have worked with the actual constituents in this community since 1979 for the election of many local, state and federal candidates. The process should and did teach me that elected officials work for, and at the whim of, the public – both the officials and the public always need to recognize that fact.

Professional experience is vitally important to effective service in office, but a diversity of experience in this community is also important to recognize community needs, avoid bias, and to treat all citizens equally and with respect and dignity.

Who has endorsed or expressed support for your candidacy?

The following people/entities (among others) have endorsed my candidacy. I have also received the highest rating given to any candidate in any race so far this year (93) by the Coalition for a Better Memphis.

Mayor AC Wharton
Mayor Joe Ford
Honorable Russell B. Sugarmon
Commissioner Walter Bailey
St. Rep. Karen Camper
Congressman Steve Cohen
Councilman Shea Flinn
Councilman Edmund Ford, Jr.
Commissioner J.W. Gibson
St. Rep. G.A. Hardaway
Commissioner James Harvey

St. Rep. Mike Kernell
State Sen. Jim Kyle
St. Sen. Beverly Marrero
St. Rep. Larry Miller
Councilman Bill Morrison
Commissioner Steve Mulroy
St. Rep. Jeanne Richardson
Councilman Jim Strickland
St. Sen. Reginald Tate
St. Rep. Joe Towns
AFL-CIO Labor Council

Calvin Anderson
Novella Smith Arnold
Rick Baker
Saul Belz, Esq.
Mischelle Best, Esq.
Julian Bolton, Esq.
Felicia Boyd
Willie Brooks
Percy A. Brown
Lara Butler, Esq.
Harold Byrd
Paula Casey
F. Guthrie Castle, Jr., Esq.
Chuck & Scottie Cobb
David Cocke, Esq.
Jonathan Cole
Veronica Coleman-Davis
Bennie L. Davis
Curtis & Vivian Dillihunt
Gwen Dillihunt
Don Donati, Esq.
John Farris, Esq.
William Foster
John Freeman
Greg Gallagher, Esq.
Lupe Gonzales
Bobby Grandberry
Lenard Hackel, Esq.
Bill Haltom, Esq.
Ted Hansom, Esq.
Lee Harris
Tomeka Hart
Kerry Hayes
Aubrey Howard
Robert Hummel
Nika Jackson
Minerva Johnican
Happy Jones
Ladon Jones
Matt Kuhn
Joseph Kyles
Norma Lester
Steve Libby, Esq.
Corey Maclin

John Marek
Gail Mathes, Esq.
Margaret Mattila
Rick Maynard
Reginald Milton
Herman Morris, Esq.
Robert A. Newman
Elijah Noel, Jr., Esq.
Cardell Orrin
Adrienne Pakis-Gillon
Antonio Parkinson
Dr. Divyen Patel
Tyrone Paylor, Esq.
Lucien Pera, Esq.
Joyce Quintrell
Ian L. Randolph
Ron Redwing
Howard Richardson
Irvin Salky, Esq.
Don & Ann Sandberg
Johnson Saulsberry
Dewun R. Settle, Esq.
Paul Shaffer
Jay & Lee Sheffield
Gwen Smith
Maxine Smith
Elder Edward Stanton
Steve Steffens
Myra Stiles
Gina Sugarmon
Dale Tuttle, Esq.
Coleman Thompson
John & Ellen Vergos
Randy Wade
Tammy Warren
Brad Watkins
Dr. Joe Weinberg
Shep Wilbun
Mary Wilder
Jocelyn Wurzburg

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?

Aside from what I've already written above in terms of the actual duties of the office of Trustee, the best way that my office can help address problems is to bring in as much tax revenue as possible in an efficient, ethical and fair way. I have been, am doing, and will continue to do this. Outside the office, I will remain involved in the community to do whatever I can to address Memphis' issues and help us realize our

potential. I am currently serving as a resource on a task force for the Metro Charter Commission. Elected officials also have the advantage of being able to bring attention to the problems and plights of others in a manner to truly address issues and get others involved. I belong to many community groups and support many causes which make valiant efforts to improve education, keep kids out of the juvenile justice system, and try to assure equal rights for everyone.

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?

The Trustee's office has tried to realize efficiencies and coordinate with other municipalities within the County by entering into intergovernmental agreements to provide services to them as to tax collections and banking. We will continue to work with the City of Memphis to do the same. We have little involvement with counties outside of Tennessee, but stay connected and up-to-date with the other 94 Trustee's office throughout Tennessee. We work together regularly on legislative issues and pending legislation.

My role in government is to be effective and responsive - I believe that is important of every government official. I am a Constitutional officer with specified statutory duties which must be fulfilled in order for our local County government to function at all. I am personally responsible and liable for the billions of dollars which pass through the Trustee's office each year.

I believe that government's role is to effectively provide the services which citizens cannot provide for themselves and to assure the safety, health and fair treatment of citizens by providing solutions to community problems. Laws do not exist to protect the majority, the majority need no protection due to their might. Laws and government should exist to protect the minority and disadvantaged and to resolve on a community-wide basis the pressing issues affecting the public.

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

Listen, have an open mind, and bring diverse people with divergent views together to make the 'best' decision, not the politically expedient one. I know that sounds simple but I believe our city could move forward by miles if every governmental official did it. One of the main stumbling blocks I have seen in dealing with government for the past 6 months is the feuding over control and the political posturing which gets us nowhere.

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?

Absolutely. I have a firm belief in what's right and what's wrong. I will listen to all sides and then make a decision and stick to it. I served on the Democratic party executive committee in the 80s and fought a losing battle against the current party primary system in the County. I have supported one City mayoral candidate while employed by another. While with the State of TN, I traveled the state to explain and gather support for a state income tax - which under the plan at the time would have reduced the regressive nature of our sales tax system and would have resulted in the vast majority of people paying less tax. It was right, but very unpopular. I deal with legislators constantly regarding pending bills which would negatively impact our taxpayers in Memphis and Shelby County. Being on the losing side does not bother me so long as I believe it is the right side.