

Throughout my nineteen-year law enforcement career, I have consistently discovered innovative and economical solutions to complex challenges. When appointed Chief Deputy, I seized the opportunity to implement cost-effective transformations within the Sheriff's Office, a commitment I aspire to uphold as your Sheriff. In 2022, I orchestrated a restructuring of the Uniform Patrol Division, adding additional deputies to patrol shifts. This bolstered deputy presence during peak hours, diminishing response times and enhancing deputy proactivity and patrol visibility countywide. Moreover, I helped facilitate the acquisition of six canines, all of which were acquired at no expense to Pickens County taxpayers. This investment equipped our deputies with valuable resources, enhancing their effectiveness in carrying out their duties. These cost-effective moves contributed to a 20.25% reduction in property crimes over one year and resulted in Pickens County being the lowest or near the lowest in the Upstate in virtually every crime statistical category. If elected Sheriff, I plan on building on this momentum to ensure that Pickens County not only continues to maintain one of the lowest crime rates in the Upstate but also strives to have the lowest crime rate in EVERY statistical category statewide.

CHALLENGES OF POPULATION GROWTH:

As Pickens County prepares to move into a new era, we need experienced leadership capable of addressing the challenges that will inevitably come with growth. Since 2010, Pickens County has grown by an astounding 12%, and present growth projections suggest by 2030, it will likely increase by another 7-8%. Rapid growth will place greater demands on already stretched resources, creating new challenges for the Sheriff's Office and all emergency services. We must be prepared to meet the demands of growth without negatively affecting the quality of public safety services. As Sheriff, I will work directly with county council to implement a fiscally responsible 5-year growth plan to ensure that law enforcement services do not suffer because of the increasing public safety demands posed by our population growth.

TRANSPARENCY/ACCESSIBILITY:

Once elected, I will increase transparency by creating the position of Community Liaison Officer. This deputy will be tasked with ensuring the Sheriff's Office's participation in community events, proactively engaging community stakeholders, managing the Sheriff's Office's Community Policing activities, and providing the public with information during critical events, ensuring that our citizens are up to date on incidents of public interest as they occur. My enhanced transparency initiative will also include regular public forums, allowing the public direct access to myself and our Command Staff so that we can personally address the issues within the community. These meetings will enhance the Sheriff's Office's understanding of the needs in our community and issues affecting our citizens while allowing the Sheriff's Office to respond to community concerns effectively.

SCHOOL SAFETY:

Our schools house some of the most vulnerable within our community; under my administration, the Sheriff's Office will continue to expand training for school resource officers, securing our children's and teachers' safety. My goal is to create the safest learning environment possible so our children can focus on learning and not worry about their safety. If elected, I will push to add additional school resource officers in any school with a student population over 1000 students. School resource officers will undergo strenuous active threat training during the summer and breaks, allowing them to hone their skills while experiencing the stressors of what a real-world threat would entail. As Chief Deputy, I secured funding to provide our school resource officers with patrol rifles and gun lockers so they would have the tools to combat any threat to their facility. I am committed to identifying technology, resources, and tools that will allow our school resource officers to operate at maximum efficiency. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office will implement anti-drug and anti-bullying programs led by school resource officers to prevent a "school to jail" pipeline from taking root.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION/COST-SAVINGS:

As Sheriff, I will work with county administration to implement an equitable step-pay system, something that Pickens County is desperately lacking, to reward employees for their length of service and mitigate talent loss to higher-paying surrounding agencies. Keeping tenured employees with PCSO will ultimately save the taxpayers countless dollars in training costs, as onboarding new deputies is neither quick nor inexpensive. Employee retention will keep institutional knowledge in-house, create more competition for promotional opportunities, and result in fewer transitions and employment gaps.

RECIDIVISM REDUCTION:

Research has found that jail educational programs reduce the likelihood of recidivism by 15%. In 2023, the Sheriff's Office, in conjunction with Pickens County Behavioral Health, was able to implement an entirely grant-funded substance abuse counseling program to inmates designed to help inmates break the cycle of addiction. As Sheriff, I will build upon this by securing additional grant-funded programs to treat mental health and anger management while providing vocation-oriented training so that we return inmates to society with the skills necessary to be contributing, productive, and tax-paying community members.

INCREASE LAW ENFORCEMENT TECHNOLOGY:

I have always believed in innovation. I was the first to establish a digital forensic program in Pickens County and have since spent my career fighting to add technological resources to our deputies' tool belt. Law enforcement technology is a force multiplier, allowing deputies to be more efficient in combating crime and, in some cases, limiting the need for additional staffing. As Sheriff, I am committed to adding additional resources such as Live 911, a tool that allows deputies to hear a 911 call as they are received in the communications center, and more drones to our drone program. Technology as simple as Live911 would drastically reduce response times, which can be the difference between life and death. At the same time, enhanced drone capability offsets the need for an expensive helicopter while achieving the same outcome.

CONSTITUTIONAL ADHERENCE:

Finally, if elected Sheriff, I am committed to Constitutional adherence. The framers of the Constitution had the foresight to see that as our country grew, so would federal and state overreach. This is why Article VI, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution mandates that executive and judicial officials be bound by an Oath of Affirmation to the Constitution. As executive office holders, Sheriffs are required to affirm their support of the Constitution, meaning that they understand that the Constitution is a limiting document designed to protect the freedoms of their citizens. It is imperative that our elected officials not only swear an oath to the Constitution but understand why they are swearing that oath and take their commitment seriously. As your Sheriff, I will hold myself to that Constitutional oath and fight to protect your Constitutional rights.

Thank You,
Chuck James
Candidate for Sheriff of Pickens County