



PMWNC Candidate Questionnaire – Norfolk County District Attorney

1. What motivated you to run for District Attorney? Please include details such as unique qualifications you bring to the table and/or personal experiences that influenced your decision to run.

I've spent my career as a public defender, standing up for individuals who often feel unheard or overlooked in the criminal justice system. Through that work, I've seen firsthand how over-incarceration, systemic inequities, and lack of accountability in law enforcement harm our communities. I'm running for District Attorney because I want to bring integrity, fairness, and a solutions-oriented approach to the office. My experience defending clients gives me a unique perspective: I understand how the system works from both sides, and I know where reforms can make a real difference — for public safety, for victims, and for people caught up in the system unnecessarily.

2. If elected, what would be your top three priorities as DA?

(1) Police accountability and transparency: Establish independent review processes and ensure misconduct is investigated impartially.

(2) Smart, humane justice policies: Reduce incarceration for nonviolent offenses, expand diversion programs, and focus resources on rehabilitation rather than default punishment.

(3) Supporting victims and communities: Ensure victims have access to advocacy, mental health support, and a voice in the justice process while promoting public safety through evidence-based practices.

3. How would you ensure transparency, accountability, adherence to ethical standards, and resistance to political influence in the DA's office? Please consider factors such as staff recruitment/training/ retention, use of technology/data, and handling cases of police misconduct or allegations of wrongful convictions.

I would ensure transparency and accountability by hiring staff committed to ethical, evidence-based justice and providing ongoing training in bias, legal ethics, and restorative justice. Technology and data would be used to track outcomes, identify disparities, and guide resource allocation, while transparent reporting would keep the public informed. Independent review mechanisms would address police misconduct, and the conviction review unit would revisit suspected wrongful convictions. I would foster an office culture where staff can raise concerns without fear of retaliation, and establish a strict no-donation policy from DA office employees to ensure decisions remain free from future political influence.

4. What steps would you take to engage with marginalized groups, who are often disproportionately affected by crime and prosecution?

Engaging marginalized communities is essential to creating a justice system that is fair, trusted, and responsive. I would prioritize regular outreach, including town halls and listening sessions, to hear directly from those most affected by the system. The office would also work closely with local advocacy groups and social service organizations to address systemic barriers and provide meaningful support. Staff training in cultural competency and bias awareness would ensure that every interaction is informed and respectful. By embedding community engagement into daily operations and maintaining transparency about office practices and outcomes, we can build trust, reduce disparities, and ensure that the justice system serves everyone equitably.

5. How would you approach cases involving individuals who suffer from substance abuse disorder, have mental health issues, or are unhoused?

Individuals facing substance use disorder, mental health challenges, or are unhoused are often caught in a cycle of criminalization rather than receiving the help they need. My approach as DA would be to prioritize treatment, rehabilitation, and supportive services over default incarceration whenever possible. This means expanding diversion programs, connecting people with community-based treatment providers, and coordinating with mental health professionals to ensure that each case is addressed holistically. The goal is not only to reduce recidivism, but also to improve public safety and outcomes for individuals who have historically been underserved by the justice system. By focusing on solutions that address the root causes of criminal behavior, we can create a system that is both compassionate and effective, protecting the community while offering people a real chance to rebuild their lives.

6. What is your stance on prosecuting low-level, nonviolent offenses such as drug possession?

I believe we should decriminalize or divert low-level, nonviolent offenses whenever possible. This approach reduces incarceration, addresses root causes, and allows law enforcement and the DA's office to focus on serious crimes. At the same time, we can combine diversion with education and treatment programs to help people break cycles of criminalization.

7. How would you address gun violence and domestic violence in Norfolk County?

Gun violence is a serious threat to public safety, but it requires a strategic, nuanced approach rather than a one-size-fits-all response. I would prioritize data-driven enforcement, targeting repeat offenders and illegal gun trafficking, while also supporting community-based prevention programs that address the root causes of violence. Importantly, cases involving gun charges with minimum mandatory sentences will always be open to amendment on a case-by-case basis. This ensures that the punishment fits the circumstances, allowing the DA's office to balance public safety with fairness and proportionality in sentencing.

Domestic violence profoundly affects individuals and families, and my approach would be victim-centered and accountable. Survivors would have access to advocacy, protective measures, and support services throughout the legal process. Offenders would be held responsible for their actions, but where appropriate, restorative justice programs could be offered as an option — providing opportunities to repair harm, promote accountability, and reduce the likelihood of future violence. This approach is designed to be fair, evidence-based, and outcome-focused: protecting the community, supporting survivors, and using restorative justice or other alternatives when it strengthens both accountability and safety.

8. In what way(s) would you measure your success as DA?

Success isn't just conviction rates. It's measured by public trust, equitable outcomes, and community safety. This includes reducing unnecessary incarceration for low-level offenses, improving outcomes in diversion and rehabilitation programs, resolving police misconduct cases more transparently and efficiently, and maintaining strong community engagement and satisfaction.

9. Is there anything else you would like voter to know about your vision for the District Attorney's office?

My vision for the Norfolk County District Attorney's office is grounded in a simple but powerful principle: justice must be fair, effective, and accountable to the people it serves. I want this office to be a model of integrity and transparency, where every decision is guided by the law, evidence, and ethics, not politics or optics. Public safety, in my view, is not measured solely by conviction numbers, but by whether our communities are truly safer, whether victims are supported, and whether our justice system treats every individual with dignity and fairness. I bring a perspective shaped by years as a public defender, seeing firsthand how over-incarceration, systemic inequities, and lack of accountability harm families and communities. That experience drives my commitment to smart, humane policies: holding dangerous offenders accountable, offering restorative justice and diversion when it improves outcomes, and reducing reliance on incarceration for low-level, nonviolent offenses.

I also believe the DA's office must be engaged with the community it serves. That means actively listening to marginalized groups, building partnerships with local organizations, and using data and transparency to ensure

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policies work as intended. It means confronting systemic inequities head-on, supporting victims while addressing root causes of crime, and empowering staff to uphold the highest ethical standards.

Ultimately, my vision is for a DA's office that is bold enough to reform when necessary, compassionate enough to offer second chances, and steadfast enough to enforce the law fairly and consistently. I want Norfolk County to have a justice system that works for everyone — protecting the community, supporting victims, holding offenders accountable, and ensuring that justice is not just delivered, but earned and trusted by the people it serves.

**** Feel free to re-publish my positions in any capacity necessary as I will stand behind them 100%. Many of my answers are not unlike my public platform published at www.TeamBarakat.com**

Thank you for your consideration,

/s/ Jim J. Barakat