



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.*

As a child, I learned firsthand how it feels to be powerless. My mother, suffering from severe postpartum depression, committed suicide when I was two weeks old. Four months later, my father was stabbed during a riot and nearly died. The police never even looked for his attacker.

In the aftermath of these traumatic events, my childhood was chaotic and marked by poverty, abuse and neglect. Despite free lunch and food stamps, there were times we did not have enough to eat, and we never had reliable water, heat or transportation. Our housing was only secure because of the Social Security survivors' benefits I received. I did not have medical or dental care for most of my childhood. Substance use disorders affected several close family members; two died as a result of those disorders. Another died from gun violence. One close family member served time in juvenile detention; another spent his entire adult life in and out of prison for violent crimes.

Surviving these circumstances and avoiding the fates of the rest of my family was incredibly challenging, but I was determined to create a better life for myself and to help others like me who had no voice, so I became a lawyer. For thirty-three years I have helped hundreds of families all over Massachusetts get justice after the worst events of their lives. I served as a prosecutor for ten years—first in the Attorney General's Office under Scott Harshbarger in the Safe Neighborhood Initiative, Victim Compensation, Appeals and Narcotics and Special Investigations Divisions; and then in the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office under Ralph C. Martin II.

In the District Attorney's Office, I was Chief of the Domestic Violence Unit, where I oversaw all domestic violence prosecutions in Suffolk County; supervisor of Dorchester District Court, the busiest trial court in the Commonwealth; and member of the Homicide Response Team, the Hiring Committee, and the Diversity Initiative Group. I have tried countless cases as lead prosecutor in District and Superior Court and supervised dozens of staff.

For the past twenty years I have worked with victims of crime and discrimination in private practice in cases involving childhood sexual abuse, sexual harassment and workplace discrimination; and conducted over 150 sexual misconduct investigations for schools, colleges and workplaces. I represented the family of alleged "Craigslist Killer" Philip Markoff, and a patient sexually abused by Dr. Roger Hardy that exposed a ten-year pattern of sexual abuse of fertility patients. I also wrote an amicus brief to the

Supreme Judicial Court that preserved an important evidence rule in sexual assault cases. I also conducted an investigation for the Concord, New Hampshire public schools that resulted in the termination and license removal of the Superintendent of Schools and the high school principal who had failed to recognize signs that a teacher was having sex with students.

The District Attorney has absolute power to decide who and what crimes to prosecute: with the stroke of a pen, the District Attorney can change a family's life forever. And much of the District Attorney's work takes place behind closed doors. For this reason, the person entrusted with the tremendous power to decide what and whom to prosecute must be someone with the highest level of skill, judgment, and integrity. So I was shocked when I saw the video the District Attorney published in the summer of 2023 related to the prosecution of Karen Read, because its contents, which could prejudice the jury pool, violated ethical rules for prosecutors. I was also shocked at other decisions made by the District Attorney in the Read case and other cases that demonstrated a pattern of decision-making far below the professional standards I was taught.

The District Attorney's failure to investigate and prosecute the 2021 murder in Canton of Sandra Birchmore, a 23-year-old pregnant woman, was the final straw. Any experienced prosecutor would have recognized that her death was not a suicide, and that the likely culprit was the man who had groomed her for sex since she was 12 years old and was the last person to see her alive. Ultimately, the federal government agreed and is now prosecuting him on related federal charges. If the measure of a society is how well it treats the most vulnerable among us, the District Attorney's response to the Birchmore case was an unconscionable failure of government.

I know from my professional and personal experience how essential it is to a healthy democracy to have a justice system that speaks for everyone. Although I had never planned on a political career, I could not tolerate such malfeasance in my community, so eighteen months ago, I announced my candidacy.

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

My overarching priority would be to restore the community's trust in the District Attorney's Office. Restoring trust requires unwavering commitment to the following:

- **Professionalism:** Rebuilding the District Attorney's Office into the county's top law office, reflecting the highest level of skill, ethics and principles of justice. Every case will be evaluated on its individual merits based on the evidence, not on political or personal influence. Trauma-informed prosecutors will empower victims and hold offenders accountable while also seeking to address the underlying causes of crime.
- **Transparency/Accountability:** Conducting a comprehensive audit and review of the District Attorney's office including personnel, prosecution protocols, budget and recent case decisions and publishing, to the extent legally permissible, the results of this audit.

- **Community Collaboration:** To restore the community's trust, the District Attorney must be visible and vocal about current issues throughout all the 28 towns and cities of Norfolk County. I will also actively engage with schools, other government agencies, non-profits and advocacy groups on issues of common concern so that we can respond when crime occurs in ways that empower victims and prevent future crime.
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.*

As a former prosecutor in the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office and Suffolk County District Attorney's Office (SCDAO) under leaders known for their high ethical and professional standards, I have seen what a transparent, ethical, and accountable office looks like. As former head of the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office Domestic Violence Unit and manager of the SCDAO's operations in Dorchester District Court, I have already been part of this leadership.

Ensuring transparency, accountability, the highest ethical standards and resistance to political influence begins with making it clear to all staff that that is what I expect—through policies, training, supervision, and most importantly, by my own example and that of all managerial staff. Staff will be rewarded for diligence, professionalism and adherence to ethical standards rather than conviction rates. To encourage candor and skill-building among staff, supervisors will provide constructive instruction rather than punishment for genuine mistakes.

In addition, as discussed above, I will conduct an audit of the office and publish the results to the extent legally permissible. I will also publish prosecution statistics including charges, disposition dates, and outcomes; investigative reports conducted by my office of officer-involved shootings; and prosecution protocols (charging standards, diversion criteria, sentencing guidelines, etc.). None of these are published by the current District Attorney. I will also assign an Assistant District Attorney to investigate allegations of wrongful convictions. To avoid political influence, I will not accept campaign donations from staff or police unions; I will clearly instruct staff not to consider anything other than the merits of the case in their decision-making; and I will create a written policy regarding prosecution of cases in which the office may have a real or perceived conflict of interest.

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

As District Attorney, I will build consistent, two-way relationships rooted in trust and respect with community organizations throughout Norfolk County. This includes holding regular listening sessions, partnering with community-based organizations, and ensuring language and disability access and cultural competency across the office. I will strive to hire staff reflective of the rich diversity of Norfolk County, and I will require staff to complete trainings to help them identify and avoid making decisions based on implicit bias based on a victim, witness, or defendant's membership in a protected group.

In addition, I would support expansion of the ROCA program to Norfolk County. ROCA is a program for youthful violent offenders currently in operation in Springfield. Most offenders currently served by the program are young people of color whose criminal activity stems from childhood trauma. The program provides accountability as well supportive services including behavioral health treatment and job opportunities that can help young offenders to become emotionally healthy, productive community members.

Finally, prioritizing prosecution of hate crimes, communicating transparently about charging standards, sentencing recommendations and diversion programs and incorporating community feedback into policy development will also help to engage marginalized groups.

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

Substance abuse disorders and mental health are two of the most significant drivers of people becoming court-involved in Norfolk County. Important first steps include creating pathways to programs proven effective in providing treatment, diversion, and prevention, while ensuring accountability along the way.

Partnering with public health agencies, clinicians, and community providers allows prosecutors to direct eligible cases toward treatment courts, crisis intervention, and supportive housing rather than incarceration. Trauma-informed practices, data-driven risk assessments, and coordinated reentry planning help reduce recidivism, stabilize individuals, and enhance public safety by addressing root causes of crime while maintaining clear consequences for serious offenses. Additionally, utilizing effective programs like drug and mental health courts, encouraging the expanded use of trained mental health professionals in police interactions involving those with mental health challenges can improve outcomes for those interacting with the police, for law enforcement, and for the community as a whole.

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

As District Attorney, every case will be evaluated on its individual merits, balancing accountability with addressing the root causes of crime to prevent recidivism. I will focus prosecutorial resources on high-level crimes—violence, criminals who exploit or prey on others, and drug trafficking—because prioritizing serious offenses removes the worst offenders from the community and delivers justice where harm is greatest. In many, if not most cases of drug possession, diversion and treatment addresses the root causes of substance disorder, thereby reducing recidivism while also offering sufficient accountability to maintain community safety.

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

In 2023, Massachusetts had 19 homicides involving intimate partner violence, and police responded to 26,463 incidents of intimate partner violence. Here in Norfolk County, the most egregious violence we've seen in the past five years has involved domestic violence, including

the homicides of Sandra Birchmore in Canton, Ana Walshe in Cohasset, Amber Buckner in Stoughton, Rose Lamour in Milton, Kathleen McLean in Dover, Teena and Arianna Kamal in Dover, William Walling in Weymouth, and Brad Larson of Sharon, not to mention other serious violence that did not result in death. Every one of these homicides is one too many.

Serving as head of the Domestic Violence Unit in the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office was one of the most impactful and proudest moments of my career. In this capacity, I prosecuted the most egregious crimes of domestic violence, established domestic violence prosecution protocols, and oversaw all domestic violence prosecutions in Suffolk County. During the time I served in the Domestic Violence Unit, no victim with whom our unit had worked was murdered.

Here is what I learned: Ending domestic violence begins with establishing relationships with (and conducting trainings for) community organizations and law enforcement that encourage reporting; working collaboratively and supportively with survivors; and holding abusers accountable through trauma-informed prosecution that prioritizes victim safety and includes survivors in decision-making. This includes seeking appropriate bail, enforcing protective orders, and pursuing serious penalties for serious offenders. Equally important are comprehensive victim services—confidential advocacy, safety planning, counseling referrals, and courtroom support—so survivors are empowered and able to participate in the justice process without fear or re-traumatization.

In relation to gun violence, Massachusetts is fortunate to have some of the strongest gun safety laws in the nation. As an Assistant District Attorney in Suffolk County, I indicted the first case under the Massachusetts Gun Control Act of 1998. As District Attorney, I will be a strong advocate for ensuring our gun laws are regularly updated, as they were last year, to stay current on new technologies including ghost guns created by 3D printers, Glock switches, and more. I will continue to advocate for a robust assault weapons ban, stronger red flag protections, and investigating out-of-state trafficking of illegal guns. To maximize efficacy, I will work closely with other DAs and the Attorney General's Office to ensure communication enhances enforcement.

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

Specific to the unacceptable current state of the Norfolk County District Attorney's office, I would measure my success by knowing that Norfolk County residents are able to once again trust that every resident of the County is equal under the law, that integrity and justice are restored to the office, and that residents feel safer.

Additionally, I will use data to measure success by tracking increases in crime reporting and participation in prosecution (which can suggest increased trust in the system), reductions in violent crime, and recidivism rates. Increased prosecution of currently unsolved homicides, as well as dismissal of unjust charges will also be considered measures of success. Finally, I will create a survey for victims and witnesses about their experience with the office, and use this feedback and that provided by supervisors, to improve performance. Analyzing outcomes ensures fairness, highlights disparities, and guides resource allocation to strategies that most effectively improve public safety and trust.

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

True justice requires individual and nuanced examination of the merits of each case, with respect and consideration for all involved parties. The best District Attorneys understand that not everyone is dealt the same deck of cards at birth, meets each individual where they are, and can distinguish between real evil, a bad choice made on a bad day, and everything in between. The best District Attorneys are also unafraid of making difficult decisions, because true justice should not be influenced by anything other than the merits of a case. Finally, the best District Attorneys are willing and able to re-evaluate evidence as appropriate and acknowledge errors.

I am incredibly honored to have been endorsed by former Massachusetts Attorney General Scott Harshbarger, former Suffolk County District Attorney Ralph Martin, a dozen local elected officials, numerous local Democratic leaders, and many others, because they know that no one is more qualified and better suited to serve as District Attorney.