



ASHTON WINKELMEYER

State Representative, District 74

Prior to running for office, Ashton Winkelmeyer has worked as the Athletic Director, Facilities Manager, and PE teacher at the Anthony School in Little Rock and serves as the Director of Pre-Academy Programming for the Little Rock Rangers.

What is the biggest issue facing the state of Arkansas and how would you address this problem if elected?

Rapidly rising crime rate

What would be your top 3 priorities for utilizing the surplus budget in Arkansas, if you had full power over the surplus?

Prioritizing police support and education, and current infrastructure and parks and rec

How do you define public safety and what changes would you make to keep all communities safe?

Public safety is the safety of every individual in the community. I believe the best way to keep all our communities safe is to subsidize and provide extensive sociological and psychological education and de-escalation training to all police officers. Every officer should be forced, as part of their licensure, like teachers, nurses, and doctors, to complete continuing education courses and diplomas or degrees in sociology.

What (if any) changes do you believe are needed to the criminal legal system in Arkansas?

Laws are laws for a reason. Our district courts need to enforce the sentences that accompany said laws. If a law is unconstitutional, then it needs to be repealed or removed. I also believe that "For-Profit" prisons are a conflict of interest. They need to be closed and purchased by the state government.

The Arkansas Public Defenders Commission has been underfunded for many years. Would you support increasing funding to help bring the department in line with American Bar Association recommendations which cap caseloads at 150 felony cases per attorney? Why or why not?

Absolutely. Court-appointed attorneys try their best in most cases. However, one attorney can only do so much before their performance is affected. I do not believe that a citizen has adequate counsel if their attorney is overloaded.

It has become common knowledge across the state of Arkansas that those facing health conditions concerning addiction and mental health are located at an increasing rate in the state prisons and local county jails. What solutions do you feel should be explored in this area?

Prisons and County Jails are not equipped to service the mentally ill. This also includes the chronically homeless. I believe there needs to be court-mandated mental health, substance abuse, and vocational counseling. If a person is arrested, and legally adjudicated mentally ill, then they remanded to the mental health counseling centers. This needs to be funded by the state, and even further, by the federal system as well.

Research indicates that juveniles that encounter the justice system in their youth will have a higher likelihood of entanglement with the adult criminal justice system. What strategies do you support to decrease this likelihood?

My strategy for mental illness also covers juvenile delinquency. Unless a youth is judged to be a threat of violence, then they need to be remanded to a counseling center, not gen pop in a prison or a county jail.

Neuroscience research has indicated that the human brain is not fully formed until approximately age 25, meaning that impulse control and long-term thinking can be impaired. Would you consider reclassifying how Arkansas young adults are treated in the adult system? Are there specific adjustments that should/could be made?

First off, remove for-profit prisons and then you have state run prisons that have incentive to rehabilitate offenders. Many prisoners, after release, have no way of earning a living so they fall back into criminal activities. Train prisoners in vocations and educate them so they have a meaningful way to not re-offend. Also, provide mental health counseling because the odds that these prisoners have experienced trauma is very high.

Do you think we have a “parole problem” and how would you address it?

Unfortunately, we are paroling people not based on behavior but based on room available in prison. That's why we have people like the killer who perpetrated 12 shootings in 12 hours, killing a gas station attendant and shooting a customer in the back of the head. He had already served time, been paroled, violated said parole, and was still out on the street to kill people.

The Arkansas Department of Corrections identified reducing solitary confinement –a practice labeled torture under international law– as a major objective in their 2021–2022 Strategic Plan, however the number of people held in isolation continues to grow. Do you agree with the need to reduce solitary confinement in our state? Why or why not?

I think solitary confinement is cruel and unusual punishment. However, some prisoners may pose a risk to other inmates, or be in danger themselves, and not be able to be in gen pop. That being said, I believe there is a better way to protect inmates without isolating them.