



# RACHEL COX

State Representative, District 15

Prior to running for office, Rachel Cox has worked as a non-profit executive leader for 15 years and has worked with agencies such as Dress For Success, Compassion House, Souls Harbor and the Cobblestone Project.

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

We have over 58% of households are considered hunger insecure. The majority of Arkansans have a hunger problem. This is not okay. At the very least, we need to be ensuring all children are receiving free universal school lunches so we know that kids are getting at least one hot meal a day.

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

- Universal free school lunches
- Educator pay increases
- Allocations for mental health/substance use disorders for uninsured or under-insured Arkansans

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

Public safety is ensuring the welfare and protections of the communities we live, work, and play so that citizens can be prosperous. I would like to see ongoing and extended training for law enforcement on DEI, social needs, community services so that our law enforcement can thrive in keeping communities safe and help it's members with root issue support rehabilitation.

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

We need more monies allocated for mental health and sober living and substance use disorder programs for uninsured and under-insured Arkansans so that we can reduce recidivism and minor drug offenses. Most offenses in Arkansas stem from substance use, yet there are no resources for those uninsured to get help they need. It's a sick cycle that the penal system profits off of where people with these diseases don't have a chance to get the rehabilitation they truly need.

**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?**

Yes, I support this as those without the means to pay attorneys should not have overworked or underpaid representation.

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?

See above answer

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?

Diversion programs, rehabilitation support, wrap around support for the entire family unit

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?

An age requirement of 21+ should be placed for all firearm purchases. I believe this change will help lower the percentage of violent crimes in young adults.

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

N/A

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?

Studies show that the effects of solitary confinement on a person’s long term mental health can be lethal, showing that those who experience solitary confinement experience nearly double the percentage of premature deaths. Reducing solitary confinement reduces recidivism and offers a rehabilitative opportunity not just punitive.