



DENISE GARNER

State Representative, District 20

Representative Denise Garner currently serves as an Arkansas State Representative for District 84 and was a small business owner and a nurse practitioner before holding office.

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

Early childhood development (pre natal - 5) would go a long way in helping to deal with our huge problems in education, workforce, over-incarceration, income inequality.

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

ECE, Mental Health programs, Inequality issues

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

All should feel safe in their communities whether at home, work, or play. I am still advocating for gun safety laws, diversity & inclusion programming, access to quality education at all levels...prevention vs punishment.

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

Too many to completely answer here. Basically, though, the unequal/unfair treatment of poor, persons of color, mentally ill.

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?

I did and would again. Underrepresentation is a huge problem.

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?

Starting early (0-5) with education and mental/ mental health, increased access to prevention and treatment programs, decriminalization of drug use.

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?

Quality Education (all levels), access to wrap-around services, community engagement programs, diversity/inclusion programs

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?

Absolutely! I would support change in "adult" definition.

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

Our entire system needs to be revamped. We have an income inequality/access to services problem.

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?

Absolutely. We've forgotten our goal rehabilitation (not torture).

Additional Comments

These issues are so complicated but I'm convinced we wouldn't need but a small percentage of jails if we spent more money on addressing inequality/systemic inequities.