



ALICIA "LISA" WALTON

Prosecuting Attorney, District 06

Alicia Walton serves as a public defender with the Pulaski County Public Defender Office. Previously, she worked for the Arkansas Center for Legal Services and opened a private practice firm focusing on criminal justice.

Describe the qualifications and experiences that make you the best candidate for the prosecutor's office.

I have a diverse base of knowledge and experiences that makes me the best candidate for Prosecuting Attorney. I have represented families, crime victims and the accused in family, probate, and all criminal and traffic courts throughout the State of Arkansas. This experience has provided me with an understanding of how the decisions rendered in courts impacts the lives of all in the community. Being a crime victim and my brother being a victim to senseless gun violence has provided me with a valuable understanding of how important it is for elected officials, especially the Prosecutor to be engaged with the communities they serve. Earning my law degree has allowed me to better understand how laws can be utilized to disproportionately affect certain communities. The experience and knowledge I acquired while serving my country coupled with the experiences and knowledge I've acquired as an attorney are what makes me the best candidate for the prosecutor's office.

In your opinion, what is the biggest challenge facing the prosecutor's office and how do you plan to address it?

The biggest challenge facing the prosecutor's office is that of the backlog of cases resulting from the pandemic. To resolve the abundance of cases, I will institute a plan whereby all cases will be assessed to determine which cases will be resolved by utilizing our specialty courts, diversion programs and other forms of alternative sentencing. This assessment will also allow for a determination as to which cases we can resolve via negotiated pleas and which will be set for trial.

**What role should money/cash bail play in pretrial release?
What steps would you take to safely reduce the rate of pretrial incarceration in our county?**

Money bail is to be assessed based on the factors outlined in the Arkansas Code. Money bail is to be set only in instances, such as, where the accused has a history of not appearing, has no significant contacts with the State and the charge involves violence. Over the years money bail has been utilized in a manner that has targeted those living at or below the poverty guidelines as a means to obtaining guilty pleas. Money bail has not stopped the very issue that it was thought to assist in eliminating and that is an individual failing to appear in court when required. For non-violent offenders, I would explore alternative ways in which to secure the individuals appearance. There are several alternatives being explored currently in Pulaski County, such as, texting reminders to the accused. I will work closely with the Committee to institute policies that will assist in reducing the number of failure to appear warrants being issued.

What is your attitude/approach toward negotiating plea bargain versus trial litigation in criminal cases?

Plea negotiations are a necessary part of the justice system. If all cases were to proceed to trial the system would collapse. I am in favor of negotiating pleas in cases where an agreement can be made that would adequately punish the accused for the act committed and address the injury sustained by the victim.

What do you think is the most effective way to deal with low-level drug offenders? What would your office policies be regarding plea bargaining in drug offense cases? Use of these individuals as criminal informants?

The most effective way to deal with low-level drug offenders is to determine if the offender would be a candidate for a diversion program, specialty court, or treatment. Plea bargains in these cases would be appropriate. I am not in favor of utilizing those who have substance abuse issues as informants. For those who are addicted to an illegal substance, rehabilitation would require one to stay away from an environment that would encourage the individual to engage with controlled substances. Acceptance into one of the programs discussed above is to provide the individual with a fresh start and to assist them in becoming clean and sober. For those who are involved in the distribution and selling of illegal substances, to become an informant would encourage them to continue with the behavior and encourage further criminal activity.

Studies show racial disparities in drug law enforcement, despite the fact that white people and people of color use and sell drugs at the same rate. What would you do to minimize these disparities?

The utilization of pre-adjudication and diversion programs is key, as they will assist in preventing those arrested from becoming felons at a disproportionate rate.

What would your policy be regarding charging children in adult court? When would you use your authority to file charges in adult court and when would you pursue a case in juvenile court?

Cases involving juvenile offenders will be filed into the Juvenile Division of Circuit Court. Juvenile Judges are better equipped in determining whether there are resources that would be available to properly rehabilitate the juvenile. The only exception to this would be cases in which the juvenile is accused of committing a homicide, and those cases will be assessed on a case by case basis.

What would you do to develop a trusting relationship with the immigrant community in your county?

Community engagement is key to building a trusting relationship with our growing immigrant community. I will meet with our immigrant communities on a regular and consistent basis, as I will for all communities within Pulaski and Perry Counties to discuss their concerns regarding crime and safety. I will utilize resources to secure personnel, such as, translators and U-Visa specialist to assist in ensuring that members of the immigrant community fully understand the criminal process and their rights as victims of crime.

Mental health has been a significant topic throughout the debate about reducing the jail population. Incarceration has been widely shown to make mental health conditions worse. What steps will you take as DA to divert people with mental health conditions from the criminal justice system?

The creation of the Little Rock District Court - Mental Health Probation Program, by myself and others is an example of my dedication to finding solutions that will adequately address the current mental health crisis. I will utilize the crisis stabilization unit and other resources to ensure that the mentally ill receive treatment and are not allowed to languish in jail where they are not able to receive adequate treatment.

How would you handle use of force incidents involving local police?

The community at large would be better served by having an outside entity, such as the State Police, to investigate use of force incidents involving local police organizations. By having a 3rd party perform the investigation, it would assist in improving community and police relations.