

Voter's Guide

A GUIDE TO 2022 ELECTIONS

GENERAL ELECTION: NOVEMBER 8

Leading up to this year's elections, The Dispatch sent questionnaires to all candidates in contested races. Candidates were asked to provide basic information such as age, political experience and contact information. They were also asked to answer three questions, limiting their responses to a set word count.

The answers provided to us are printed in this guide. We only edited the answers for length; we didn't make any grammatical corrections.

Questionnaires were sent to all candidates, and our staff followed up with phone calls and emails in an effort to get responses from every candidate.



November 8, 2022 General Election Sample ballots

LOWNDES COUNTY

(Composite sample ballot for the November 8 general election – actual listings will vary by districts and precincts.)

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 1ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT (Vote for one)

- Dianne Black Democrat
 Trent Kelly Republican
 Write-in

COURT OF APPEALS DISTRICT 3 POSITION 2 (Vote for one)

- John H. Emfinger Nonpartisan
 Write-in

CHANCERY COURT DISTRICT 14-2 (Vote for one)

- Joseph N. "Joe" Studdard Nonpartisan
 Write-in

CHANCERY COURT DISTRICT 14-3 (Vote for one)

- Paula Drungole-Ellis Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 1 (Vote for one)

- Chuck Easley Nonpartisan
 James T. Kitchens, Jr. Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 2 (Vote for one)

- Lee J. "Jay" Howard Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 3 (Vote for one)

- P. Trina Davidson Brooks Nonpartisan
 Mark A. Cliett Nonpartisan
 Michelle Easterling Nonpartisan
 Bennie L. Jones, Jr. Nonpartisan
 Write-in

SPECIAL ELECTION DISTRICT 37 STATE REPRESENTATIVE (Vote for one)

- Andy Boyd
 David M. Chism
 Write-in

LOWNDES COUNTY COURT JUDGE (Vote for one)

- Allison Pritchard Kizer Nonpartisan
 Write-in

COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 1 (Vote for one)

- Jane O. Kilgore Nonpartisan
 Write-in

COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 2 (Vote for one)

- Brad Fleming Nonpartisan
 Write-in

OKTIBBEHA COUNTY

(Composite sample ballot for the November 8 general election – actual listings will vary by districts and precincts.)

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 1ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT (Vote for one)

- Dianne Black Democrat
 Trent Kelly Republican
 Write-in

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 3RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT (Vote for one)

- Michael Guest Republican
 Shuwaski A. Young Democrat
 Write-in

COURT OF APPEALS DISTRICT 3 POSITION 2 (Vote for one)

- John H. Emfinger Nonpartisan
 Write-in

CHANCERY COURT DISTRICT 14-1 (Vote for one)

- Rodney Faver Nonpartisan
 Write-in

CHANCERY COURT DISTRICT 14-3 (Vote for one)

- Paula Drungole-Ellis Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 1 (Vote for one)

- Chuck Easley Nonpartisan
 James T. Kitchens, Jr. Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 2 (Vote for one)

- Lee J. "Jay" Howard Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 3 (Vote for one)

- P. Trina Davidson Brooks Nonpartisan
 Mark A. Cliett Nonpartisan
 Michelle Easterling Nonpartisan
 Bennie L. Jones, Jr. Nonpartisan
 Write-in

SPECIAL ELECTION DISTRICT 37 STATE REPRESENTATIVE (Vote for one)

- Andy Boyd
 David M. Chism
 Write-in

OKTIBBEHA COUNTY COURT JUDGE (Vote for one)

- Charles Bruce Brown Nonpartisan
 C Marty Haug Nonpartisan
 Lee Ann Self Turner Nonpartisan
 Write-in

CLAY COUNTY

(Composite sample ballot for the November 8 general election – actual listings will vary by districts and precincts.)

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 1ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT (Vote for one)

- Dianne Black Democrat
 Trent Kelly Republican
 Write-in

COURT OF APPEALS DISTRICT 3 POSITION 2 (Vote for one)

- John H. Emfinger Nonpartisan
 Write-in

CHANCERY COURT DISTRICT 14-2 (Vote for one)

- Joseph N. "Joe" Studdard Nonpartisan
 Write-in

CHANCERY COURT DISTRICT 14-3 (Vote for one)

- Paula Drungole-Ellis Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 1 (Vote for one)

- Chuck Easley Nonpartisan
 James T. Kitchens, Jr. Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 2 (Vote for one)

- Lee J. "Jay" Howard Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 3 (Vote for one)

- P. Trina Davidson Brooks Nonpartisan
 Mark A. Cliett Nonpartisan
 Michelle Easterling Nonpartisan
 Bennie L. Jones, Jr. Nonpartisan
 Write-in

SPECIAL ELECTION DISTRICT 37 STATE REPRESENTATIVE (Vote for one)

- Andy Boyd
 David M. Chism
 Write-in

CONSTABLE DISTRICT 2 (Vote for one)

- Albert "Whoodie" Lee Independent
 James "Jimmy" McKee Independent
 Write-in

WEST POINT CONSOLIDATED SD SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 1 (Vote for one)

- Henry "Gene" Brown Independent
 Write-in

WEST POINT CONSOLIDATED SD SCHOOL BOARD DISTRICT 2 (Vote for one)

- Tommy M. Coleman Independent
 Write-in

NOXUBEE COUNTY

(Composite sample ballot for the November 8 general election – actual listings will vary by districts and precincts.)

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES 3RD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT (Vote for one)

- Michael Guest Republican
 Shuwaski A. Young Democrat
 Write-in

COURT OF APPEALS DISTRICT 3 POSITION 2 (Vote for one)

- John H. Emfinger Nonpartisan
 Write-in

CHANCERY COURT DISTRICT 14-3 (Vote for one)

- Paula Drungole-Ellis Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 1 (Vote for one)

- Chuck Easley Nonpartisan
 James T. Kitchens, Jr. Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 2 (Vote for one)

- Lee J. "Jay" Howard Nonpartisan
 Write-in

16TH CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE - PLACE 3 (Vote for one)

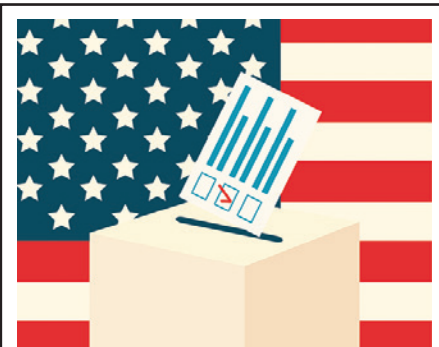
- P. Trina Davidson Brooks Nonpartisan
 Mark A. Cliett Nonpartisan
 Michelle Easterling Nonpartisan
 Bennie L. Jones, Jr. Nonpartisan
 Write-in

SPECIAL ELECTION NOXUBEE PROSECUTOR (Vote for one)

- Tina Holcombe-Ferrell Independent
 Write-in

SPECIAL ELECTION NOXUBEE TAX ASSESSOR AND COLLECTOR (Vote for one)

- Valerie Brooks-Harris Independent
 Shaquita Hampton-Phillips Independent
 Write-in



Every vote counts!

16th Circuit Court Judge - Place 1

Term: 4 years, Annual salary: \$158,000



1. Do you think drug diversion programs are effective? Why or why not?

2. What measures should the court implement to deal more effectively with cases involving mental issues?

3. How can the court reduce recidivism?

Chuck Easley

Occupation: Attorney and retired Mississippi Supreme Court Justice
Education: Bachelor of Business Administration, University of Mississippi; Master of Business Administration, Mississippi State University; Juris Doctor (Law Decree) University of Mississippi; Graduate of National District Attorneys College, Career Prosecutor Course; Over 500 hours of Continuing Legal and Judicial Education
Political experience: Mississippi Supreme Court Justice 2001-2008.
Residence: Caledonia
Family: Widower, two daughters and three grandchildren
Email: chuckeasleyattorney@gmail.com
Phone: (662) 327-1000



It is proven to work. It is very successful. If people qualify, they have a chance to turn their lives around. Furthermore, it keeps the Court from being jammed up with too many cases.

Lawyers who represent clients with mental health issues have an obligation to inform the Court about this situation. It is up to the Court to order a mental evaluation of Defendants charged with a crime. Based on the findings obtained the Court can order what is necessary to proceed. Each case must be judged on its own merits.

The Court can reduce recidivism by being more careful enforcing the law. For instance, in February the Judge sentenced a man for sexual battery of an eight-year-old girl to only three years to serve for sexually violating the eight-year-old girl victim time after time. Seventeen years suspended but only three years to serve. The probability of this monster preying on a child again is highly likely. The Judge needs to put the hammer down on violent crimes, not make excuses for criminals. Victims have rights.

James (Jim) T. Kitchens (I)

Occupation: Circuit Judge
Education: BBA Mississippi State University (Major in Economics); JD Mississippi College School of Law
Political experience: Circuit Judge since January 1, 2003
Residence: Lowndes County Resident
Family: Married to Jo Ann Kitchens
Email: jtkjak523@bellsouth.net
Phone: (662) 356-0604



I have run a drug intervention program for approximately 20 years. They can be very effective and helpful if an individual is sick and tired of being sick and tired. The Golden Triangle has a great sobriety community and I have been able to use existing resources along with my drug court staff to help a large number of drug offenders regain their sobriety and restore lives that were in turmoil to say the least. However, if an individual is not ready to receive help then no amount of diversion court programs will be successful.

Mental health courts are certainly being discussed. The problem tends to be that the professionals needed to aid in these programs tend to be located more often in bigger cities and thus, it is hard to staff a program in our smaller counties. If a defendant is so mentally ill that they are not competent to stand trial, they are often involuntarily committed in Chancery Court and we lose jurisdiction over them. If they are determined to be insane then we certainly have no jurisdiction over them and they are committed to some type of mental health facility for some period of time. We have a decent sized contingent of mental health workers in this area through Community Counseling who are crucial in providing services to our defendants who are on some type of supervised probation.

Ending recidivism in large part begins with the Defendant. In 20 years I have been responsible for several thousand defendants receiving General Equivalency Diplomas. I have also helped many Defendants obtain entrance into our excellent Community College System to obtain specialized job training such as electronics, plumbing, welding and other high demand job skills. I believe the best defense against recidivism is getting defendants a job and getting them into a Church home. The job market is hot right now and I have many employers looking to hire my drug court participants.

16th Circuit Court Judge - Place 2

Term: 4 years, Annual salary: \$158,000

Lee Howard V - Unopposed

16th Circuit Court Judge - Place 3

Term: 4 years, Annual salary: \$158,000



1. Do you think drug diversion programs are effective? Why or why not?

2. What measures should the court implement to deal more effectively with cases involving mental issues?

3. How can the court reduce recidivism?

P. Trina Davidson Brooks

Occupation: Assistant District Attorney
Education: B.S. (Mississippi University for Women); J.D. (Mississippi College School of Law)
Political experience:
Residence: West Point, Mississippi
Family: Married to Alonzo Brooks, two children
Email: trinadavidson26@gmail.com
Phone: (662) 275-0570



I believe drug diversion programs are effective and necessary. When individuals are struggling with drug and alcohol addictions, they are more likely to commit nonviolent crimes such as theft, credit fraud and other crimes to support their addiction. Drug diversion programs can help with drug and alcohol dependencies as well as prevent future criminal activity. The 16th Circuit Court District has a drug intervention court that provides comprehensive supervision, drug testing and treatment services to nonviolent offenders who participate in the program. As an Assistant District Attorney, I have referred nonviolent offenders to participate in the district's drug intervention court and seen positive results. Specifically, I have observed participants graduate from the court equipped with the tools they need to rebuild their lives and enjoy a life free of drugs and criminal activity. The cost associated with such court is far less than the cost of incarceration.

In 2019, the Mississippi Legislature extended the definition of intervention courts to include veterans and mental health courts providing circuit courts with an avenue to deal with mental health issues. Unfortunately, I'm aware of only a few courts in Mississippi that have implemented or are in the process of implementing a mental health court. I believe mental health courts can achieve goals similar to drug court, as it can provide mental health treatment to nonviolent offenders as an alternative to incarceration, and prevent future criminal activity. I believe we should take advantage of any opportunity to create a court that will not only provide mental health treatment to nonviolent offenders, but will also reduce recidivism and increase public safety. Similar to drug intervention courts, mental health courts will also create a much less financial burden on the state as the cost of incarceration far exceeds the cost of mental health court.

As an Assistant District Attorney, I see a number of individuals who commit nonviolent crimes and either struggle with a drug addiction or mental health illness. These individuals oftentimes become repeat offenders because the underlying drug addiction or mental health illness is never addressed. By implementing intervention programs aimed at providing mental health treatment or drug treatment, I believe courts will see a reduction in recidivism as these programs will rehabilitate and reform offenders giving them an opportunity to live productive lives in our communities.

Mark Cliett

Occupation: Attorney / Municipal Judge
Education: Mississippi State University, Bachelors of Business Administration, 1992; University of Mississippi School of Law, Juris Doctor, 1994
Political experience: I am not a Politician. I have never run for political office before. I have previously been appointed Public Defender (6 years), Municipal Prosecutor (4 years) and currently serve as Municipal Judge (11+ years)
Residence: Clay County, Mississippi
Family: Married to Shana Sheffield Cliett, three children
Email: markcliett@gmail.com
Phone: (662) 494-4999



I do believe that drug diversion programs, like Intervention (drug) Court, are effective. I believe this because I have personally seen great results. I also have presided over cases where the offender chose to go to the Mission or Body Builders / Crossroads for addiction issues. Many of these persons have had great success. Also, I am the only candidate in my race who has worked as a Judge with a drug court. As your next Circuit Judge I plan to have a drug court to help people with addiction issues.

I believe that we should follow the advice of the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court. He stated that Mental Health Courts and Veteran's Courts should be considered as additions to existing Intervention Courts. As your next Circuit Judge, I will seek to add both to our Intervention Court.

Recidivism can be decreased through a joint effort of the Court, Legislature, Churches, Schools and families. The Courts cannot do it alone. As Your next Circuit Judge I will sentence violent offenders appropriately as a deterrent to future offenders. This alone is not enough. We need help from our community to educate people, especially children. We also need help from our local elected officials to make sure that people have an opportunity to work at a good job so that they can support their families. All of this coupled with Intervention Courts should reduce recidivism.

16th Circuit Court Judge - Place 3

Term: 4 years, Annual salary: \$158,000



1. Do you think drug diversion programs are effective? Why or why not?

2. What measures should the court implement to deal more effectively with cases involving mental issues?

3. How can the court reduce recidivism?

Michelle Easterling

Occupation: Attorney; Clay County Prosecuting Attorney
Education: Millsaps College (Bachelor's of Arts 1995; Magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa (Alpha of Mississippi)); University of Mississippi School of Law, Juris Doctor, 1998)
Political experience: I am currently serving my third term as Clay County Prosecuting Attorney.
Residence: Clay County
Family: Married to Thomas Easterling, two sons
Email: michelledeasterling@gmail.com
Phone: (662) 494-5184



The 16th Circuit Court District Intervention Court (previously referred to as "Drug Court") exists as an option for first time, non-violent offenders. The primary goals of intervention courts are to reduce recidivism, reduce substance abuse among participants, and to rehabilitate participants. Model programs provide, among other things, access to treatment and rehabilitation programs, mandatory drug testing to ensure participants make safe, legal choices, and referrals to educational opportunities such as GED and work force training. So long as these courts are structured, adequately staffed, consistently administered, and appropriately funded, I believe they can be an effective tool in reducing the court's docket and helping individual offenders return to normal, productive lives, free from drug addiction and the adverse impacts of incarceration on the individual offender and his/her family and community. Personal responsibility plays a large part of success in this program and prepares its graduates for lives as productive citizens.

The Mississippi Constitution vests jurisdiction over "cases of idiocy, lunacy, and persons of unsound mind" in Chancery courts. Since 2019, Mississippi law provides for the creation of mental health diversion programs. However, the time and resources needed to develop and maintain a separate mental health diversion program could better be utilized to fund programs that assists individuals in need of mental health treatment, particularly before those individuals commit felonies. As Clay County Prosecutor, I worked with the Court to occasionally hold misdemeanor charges in abeyance, pending assessment and treatment of offenders by accredited organizations. Upon the conclusion of treatment, the Court addressed the criminal action with an offender who was more fully capable of taking responsibility for misconduct, or participating in his or her defense of such charge. Mental health issues and funding needs for treatment are important; circuit court is not the appropriate venue to provide for or fund such treatment.

Our courts can work to reduce recidivism by permitting, supporting and, if possible, encouraging suitable participants in the criminal justice system to participate in work-force/skills training while incarcerated — much like the recent construction skills certification program sponsored by EMCC and the Clay County Sheriff's Department, which graduated 11 inmates with certifications in construction. Many employers and organizations offer gainful employment opportunities in "safe" work environments for persons recovering from substance abuse, addiction, or who are re-entering society post-incarceration. Broader approaches to lowering recidivism are ultimately an issue for the Mississippi Department of Corrections ("MDOC"), as circuit courts do not have the resources to educate/retrain all inmates before they re-enter society. Finally, and most significantly, when a fair trial produces a guilty verdict from an impartial jury, the court must hold the guilty party accountable to deter others from committing the same offenses. This requires fair and consistent sentencing practices.

Bennie L. Jones Jr.

Occupation: Attorney
Education: The University of Southern Colorado, Pueblo, Colorado, now known as Colorado State University at Pueblo, Colorado; Law Degree at University of Florida at Gainesville, Florida
Political experience: None. Never run for political office.
Residence: West Point, Miss.
Family: Married to Anna Jones, three children
Email: bjonesjr111@aol.com
Phone: (662) 494-1024



The reason I think they are effective is because I have seen them work. Particularly in cases where the enrollee has the right motivation and strong family support, the success rate is over 50%.

The courts should and can put measures in place where funding is available to deal more effectively with mental health issues, or it may utilize existing programs that are already in place to deal with individuals who come into the criminal justice system with mental health issues. I have been a criminal defense attorney for forty (40) years, we have utilized the facilities at Whitfield to have individuals evaluated to determine what issues they are actually dealing with and proceed accordingly. Also, sometimes in certain cases it is, or maybe, something as basic as getting them back on their medications is all that is needed. Often the individuals are being treated and monitored by local agencies such as Community Counseling Services and in special cases are allowed to serve their prison time in the local county jail in order for the monitoring and treatment to continue.

The court can reduce recidivism provided funds are available, by implementing avenues to help inmates transition back into society after they have served several years in prison. Often when individual are incarcerated for a year or more it is apparent that they have become institutionalized and robbed of their ability to function upon release back into society. That is where certain non profit programs can come into play when state funds are not available. Furthermore, programs do exist in some prison facilities whereby transition opportunities exist for motivated individuals to further their educational and vocational educational aspirations while in prison or while in pretrial diversion or drug diversion programs.

District 37 State Representative

Term: 4 years, Annual salary: \$23,500 plus per diem



1. Where do you stand on Medicaid expansion?

2. Our state is one of the only in the southeast with a net population loss. To what do you attribute that?

3. In what ways can the state prepare a skilled workforce in an effort to recruit industry?

Clay, Lowndes, Oktibbeha Counties

Andy Boyd

Occupation: Retired business executive (Swoope Insurance Agency 30 years/YMCA 11 years)
Education: Bachelor of Science-Business, Mississippi State University
Political experience: N/A
Residence: 129 Whispering Trees, Columbus, MS 39702
Family: Married to Sherry Boyd, three sons, five grandchildren and one on the way
Email: Andy.boyd1957@gmail.com
Phone: (662) 386-8216



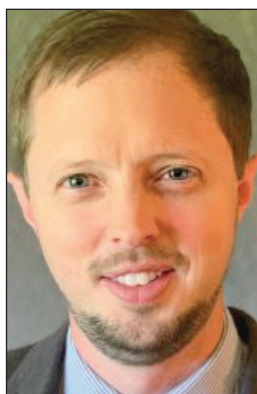
Medicaid expansion is quite the political buzzword. In August, I was asked by a friend if I was for Medicaid expansion – My immediate answer was no. My thoughts were if we, as a "poor and unhealthy state" could afford this? In my studies, I have found that there are federal funds available for a limited time with a 90% cost share. Maybe a modified version of expansion with a known cost could be pursued? In a much related healthcare issue, I am pro-hospital and pro-health care. Our state needs to find a way to help alleviate rising hospital expenses and budgetary pressures. We need financially healthy hospitals or we will have more than Medicaid expansion issues. Hospitals are large employers in our communities and contribute to our Quality of Life. Healthcare is a Quality of Life issue that cannot be ignored for people of all walks of life.

It is hard for me to understand. I am a loyal Mississippian and have NEVER considered leaving. My three grown sons and their families have chosen to live here. I love my neighbors, my community, and way of life. That being said, two issues come to mind. First and foremost, crime and public safety need to be addressed. Criminals need to be punished, not protected. Laws need to be strengthened and law enforcement supported. Second, many buzzwords come to mind: Brain drain, education, job and career opportunities, taxes, wasteful spending, regulations/over regulation, parks, arts, recreation, and quality of life. Then I thought, "That's a lot!" We need to encourage a better quality of leadership in the public arena: Business leaders, educators, and others with specific skill sets that are role models with courage and common sense to cast vision and lead. We should not let them go it alone!

I believe that a skilled workforce begins at home and extends into a caring, disciplined, and community involved K-12 education. Our students should attain basic reading, writing, math, communication, and technological skills while in K-12. Beginning with middle school and into high school, students (our children) should be introduced to career opportunities. Parents and students alike should be made aware of options after high school including 2 and 4 year college degrees and beyond. Also, just as important are options for career and trade opportunities. I was just a part of a collaboration between FORGE (Family Organizations Recruiting Great Employees) and the Communiversity. Two thousand 8th graders over 2 days attended a skilled trade fair: Hands on, engaging, and informative! Local business owners working alongside educators showcasing construction, manufacturing, and skilled trades. A REAL TIME VISION OF THEIR FUTURE!

David M. Chism

Occupation: Founder and owner of Greenaway Holdings, LLC
Education: Doctorate – IWS, Orange Park, FL; Master's – Lee University, Cleveland, TN; Bachelor's – MUW, Columbus
Political experience: I have never held public office. I was privileged to make it to the runoff between myself and Mr. Lynn Wright two years ago. I helped campaign unofficially for Keith Gaskin's election. I have also served on the board for A Better Columbus. I am more of a businessman than a politician.
Residence: Lowndes County / Rural Hill
Family: Married; four children
Email: davidm4mississippi@gmail.com
Phone: (662) 867-3700



I favor a healthier Mississippi. In many ways, we are now seeing a big collusion between the government, hospital corporations, insurance companies, and big pharma Whether it was intentional or not, the result has been higher premiums, higher drugs, and fewer choices Lost in the mix is the traditional relationship between patient and doctor. Rural hospitals are often the scapegoat of this collusion. They suffer (often indirectly) from over-regulation. Mississippi should drop certificate of need requirements and allow hospitals to have as many beds as they want. I do not favor expansions that extend benefits to able-bodied but nonworking individuals at the expense of other taxpayers. Pregnant mothers and their children are already typically covered. As of right now, a socialistic "expansion" of Medicaid will further convolute a system that is benefiting "Big Health Care". If a better deal comes on the table, I would be open to it.

This question was proposed at a recent Community conversation hosted by the CREATE foundation. Studies revealed that the Golden Triangle was especially problematic, with Starkville being the least affected. Crime is likely a big factor. But looking deeper we see that income disparity, fueled largely by the "brain drain" effect, has compelled many working-age individuals to earn their living out of state. I see this trend changing. Aside from our fine universities. The Golden Triangle has some of the greatest workforce development assets in the world, including the EMCC Communiversity, the Lowndes County Career and Technical Center, and MSMS. (MSMS is a surprisingly hands-on and practical school.) As these institutions continue to turn out skilled laborers, I see the "brain drain" prodigals returning home and partnering with these fine graduates. The result will be an economic boom the likes of which we have not seen in many years.

No student should ever feel inferior for choosing the trade school path. Four year degrees, as wonderful as they are, simply do not yield the same monetary return they once did. Appropriations need to acknowledge this trend. Workforce development starts at home. In terms of state involvement, education needs to address career and life skills sooner. We could swap Algebra II testing requirements for basic economics, personal finance and budgeting, and interviewing properly for a job. With laborers in place, industries want two things — good infrastructure and low taxes. They also want to read positive headlines that don't involve scandals and racial clashing of local leaders. We're getting there. If the government can stay out of the way, recruitment coalitions like The FORGE will help ensure both industries and small businesses have what they need to thrive. An unencumbered free market has an amazing ability to balance itself.



Make your voice heard.



Oktibbeha County Court Judge

Term: 4 years, Annual salary: \$148,000



1. County Court hears youth cases. What experience do you have working with youth-related legal issues?

2. What other experience do you have that makes you the best choice for leading a brand new court in Oktibbeha County?

3. What will be some of the unique challenges the county court will face after it is established and how should those be addressed?

Charles Bruce Brown

Occupation: Attorney at Law, Municipal Prosecutor and Municipal Attorney
Education: Bachelors of Science in Engineering, Masters of Business Administration, at Mississippi State University
Political experience: Judicial positions in Mississippi are nonpartisan and therefore not political.
Residence: 102 East Main Street, Starkville MS 39759 (Office)
Family: Married; two sons
Email: cbb@cbrucebrownlaw.com
Phone: (662) 324-9180



County Court will hear all Youth Court Cases that are filed in Oktibbeha County, so the cases that are currently presided over by the Youth Court referee or appointed hearing officer, Honorable Lydia Quarles, will go to County Court. I have represented juveniles in several counties in Mississippi for the past 32 years and continue to do so on a regular basis. I have represented the parents in youth court where Child Protective Services has become involved and have one pending in Winston County. I have attended youth court seminars, the most recent one being a prosecutors seminar provided by the Attorney General's Office.

County Court will be a division of Circuit Court and the Circuit Clerk, Tony Rook, will become the Circuit and County Court Clerk. I have practiced in the Circuit and County Courts of Mississippi for 32 years representing defendants in criminal cases, as well as, plaintiffs and defendants in civil cases. I have been a prosecutor for over 14 years so I understand the burdens of proof, defenses and positions of the attorneys who will practice before County Court. County Court will conduct jury trials, and I have tried many cases including two murder trials in the past year the last resulted in a not guilty verdict. County Court will hear all appeal cases from Municipal and Justice Court, and I have appealed numerous cases over the years. I have most experience with the types of cases that will come before County Court including jury trials.

Oktibbeha County Court will have to be provided office space; the Circuit and County Court Clerk will have to hire new staff; a court reporter will have to be hired, and security such as bailiffs will be needed. A Court Administrator will be needed to schedule cases and maintain the docket. The county supervisors will be deciding and funding the facility and equipment for the court. The Circuit Courtrooms will be available, except when Circuit Court is in term, which is normally for two weeks four times a year. I have practiced before some excellent judges, who have shown me how a court should be run, and I have practiced before judges that have shown me what should not be done. I can assure you that I will follow the law, including the constitution; be fair and impartial, and will treat everyone with respect.

C. Marty Haug

Occupation: Justice Court Judge and Attorney
Education: Starkville High School, MSU – B.A. in History, and Florida Coastal School of Law, Juris Doctorate
Political experience: Sturgis Municipal Court Judge (6 years), Twice-elected Oktibbeha County Justice Court Judge (7 years)
Residence: 815 Pine Circle, Starkville, MS
Family: Married to Rowan Williams Haug, two children
Email: marty@martyhauglaw.com
Phone: (662) 617-9489



Early in my career, I practiced as a full-time public defender in Florida's Youth Court. In that role, I represented hundreds of young people navigating through the legal system. After returning to Starkville, I continued to represent clients in a wide variety of Youth Court matters in Oktibbeha and surrounding counties through private practice. Additionally, I have served as Guardian Ad Litem, investigating and reporting to the court on cases of abuse and neglect on behalf of the victim. As the only candidate with the benefit of practicing in Youth Court in multiple counties in Florida and in Mississippi, I have a larger and more varied "toolbox" for identifying and implementing efficient and effective strategies to improve our current court system, to provide fair trials for everyone, to carry out the impartial administration of justice, and to ensure the safety and well-being of all citizens in Oktibbeha County.

With 19 years as a practicing attorney, I have extensive experience in Youth, County, Circuit, and Chancery Courts representing thousands of clients in every trial court level in two states, including youth court, civil matters, and criminal cases from misdemeanor to murder. I am the only candidate that has served as an elected judge—2 terms as Justice Court Judge, 6 years as appointed Sturgis Municipal Court Judge. County Court holds concurrent jurisdiction with Justice, Circuit, and Chancery Courts, and it is a waste of taxpayer dollars for it to focus solely on Youth Court (a part-time position). For County Court to meet its full potential, the candidate should have experience in all the areas over which the judge presides. County Court Judge is an extension of what I have already been doing as a Judge, and thus, I am best prepared to get County Court running from day one.

Scope: County Court is created when a county's population exceeds 50,000, and its courts have become overloaded. A County Court Judge determines, to some extent, the scope and cases heard within that court. The Court must not just be a Youth Court, but must relieve the burden from Circuit, Justice, and Chancery Courts and ensure Oktibbeha County's judicial needs are addressed in a timely manner.
Funding: As a new court and a new judgeship, funding will be tight. Youth Court especially will struggle without proper funding. I anticipate periodic lobbying, grant writing, and partnering with community programs that could benefit youth court in particular.
Scheduling/Staffing: Since County Court is a brand-new court, it will need to be staffed for operations including an administrator, clerks, bailiffs, and court reporters. Space may be shared with Circuit Court so coordinating courtrooms and court time to be effective will be important.

Lee Ann Turner

Occupation: Attorney and Part-time Oktibbeha County Youth Court Referee & Chancery Court Special Master
Education: J.D. University of Alabama School of Law 1996; B.A. University of Alabama School of Law 1992, Magna Cum Laud
Political experience:
Residence: Starkville
Family: Married to Jon Turner, one daughter
Email: lturner@winfieldlawfirm.com
Phone: (662) 251-1300



Served as Oktibbeha County Youth Court Referee for 13 years and had annual Youth Court Judicial training from the MS Judicial College on all matters that Youth Courts handle (abuse, neglect, delinquency, mental and drug/alcohol commitments, school attendance cases, etc.). I am trained in trauma informed care for children and how courts can impact children's lives. For 15 years I've served as a guardian ad litem in Chancery and Youth Courts representing the best interests of children in cases of alleged abuse, neglect, termination of parental rights, etc. I've handled adoptions of children providing permanent placements and stability. For 13 years I've served as a school student disciplinary hearing officer on school law issues relating to students' rights. As Special Master in Chancery Court I've heard mental and drug and alcohol civil commitments of children ages 14-18. I've represented guardianships and/or conservatorships of children.

I served as staff attorney for 5 chancery court judges for a period of almost six years and received training as a court administrator during that time regarding budgeting issues, hiring requirements, scheduling of hearings, and communications with attorneys appearing before the Court. This experience was invaluable to learn from seasoned judges how to run an efficient and effective court. Serving as a part-time Youth Court Referee for Oktibbeha County for more than a decade has helped me become familiar with the resources and programs that we have available for our children and our families. I also have training and experience with the MYCIDS computer program that all Youth Court cases use for filing and keeping records of all actions taken in Youth Court. MYCIDS is a unique computer system that is different from other MS electronic court systems such as the MEC used by the other state trial courts.

A unique challenge that county court will face is scheduling hearings, as there is currently no courtroom dedicated to County Court matters and courtroom use will need to be coordinated with the Circuit and Chancery Courts. Since our Circuit and Chancery Courts have three full-time judges and only two courtrooms each, this is already a challenge at times. However, being creative and resourceful with our existing spaces will be key in addressing this issue and being flexible and willing to maximize the available courtrooms during the off-times will help. There will also be challenges with finding new and additional resources and programs and assistance for our children and families in the Youth Court. Having a full-time Youth Court will aid in the energy and time it will take to get systems into place and ensure that they are safe and effective.

I = incumbent



Help make your community a better place.

General Election - November 8, 2022

Polls are open until 7 p.m.

Don't forget to vote.