



Garland County Republican Candidates Addressed HSV Residents – 2022

Description

The Hot Springs Village Governmental Affairs Committee (GAC) arranged for both a Republican and a Democrat Primary Forum for the upcoming election. The Republic Primary Forum was on Thursday, March 31, 2022, and the Democrat Primary Forum is scheduled for Wednesday, April 6.

The Republican Forum was divided into three segments. The first part was for candidates seeking Garland County seats. Secondly, Arkansas state candidates spoke, and finally, candidates seeking Saline County seats gave their presentations. This report addresses only the first portion of the forum. This report is NOT a transcription.

Keith Keck, Justice of the Peace in Saline County was the forum moderator and introduced the current Garland County Justice of the Peace, Larry Raney, and the incumbent, Garland County Coroner Stuart Smedley.

Candidates were given three to five minutes after which two questions were posed to each.

Keck said the reason that the primary is key for some of the Republican candidates is that whoever wins the Republican primary will be unopposed in the general election. Keck also added that, "there is significant turnover in Saline County."

Larry Raney, Garland County District 13 Seated Justice of the Peace

Keck explained that the areas that Raney represents are Magellan, Balboa, and all the way up into the Cortez area. Raney is running a contested race, but his opponent did not attend the forum.

Raney said this is his eighth year as a Garland County J. P. Raney was 22 years old when he began public service. He said, "It is that Boy Scout thing in me that I was brought up by my parents to do – to stay involved, get involved, and be part of the answer – not part of the problem. We were taught right from wrong and we lived by a code. I don't know about the rest of you guys, but sometimes I wonder where the code went."



Larry Raney, Garland County District 13 Seated Justice of the Peace

"I am very much a constitutionalist...I believe in your right to have free speech, and the right to bear arms. I do not believe in abortion, because I was raised Catholic. I believe in the sanctity of a child and I believe life starts at conception." The Quorum Court doesn't address these kinds of issues.

The primary function of a Quorum Court (QC) member is to set the budget and oversee the budget. The QC does a lot of grant requests. "We really need to publish more of the information about how much grant money we get. When grant money comes to us, it allows us to do something we couldn't do because we have only X number of dollars coming in from taxpayers."

"Couple of things I am very proud of that we've done in the last year is, we have a program that if you have pets in Garland County and they need to be spayed or neutered, you can go to the fire department and ask for a voucher. Take that to your vet. Most vets will honor it and we will pay up to \$50." Raney said he hopes to add identification chipping of pets to the program.

Raney serves on three committees: the HR Committee, Vice-chair of the IT Committee, and the Chair of Public Health, Safety, and Welfare.

Raney said his committee was responsible for the road tax vote coming before the voters. This tax is used for roads, bridges, etc. The previous bonds were paid off and now the county is able to use all of the tax money coming in and not pay bond interest. "With this program, we will be able to make many, many improvements."

"Nobody likes to pay taxes. I don't either. But I also know you can't get anything done without money."

"If you are so inclined, I would love to have your vote. I enjoy the work. I love what I do. The Quorum Court is a lot of fun in a way and a lot of work as well...I do my homework, I read everything. I find the errors and we talk about them."

What is a major challenge of the office you seek and how would you address it?

Raney replied, "The major challenge is reading everything you have to read. It takes a long time. You

get an awful lot of paperwork.”

“The next biggest thing I already mentioned is roads. That is the thing we get more calls about than anything.”

What separates you from your primary election opponent?

Raney answered, “I really don’t know enough about Mr. Vaughn to know what separates us except I have been there for eight years and I know how it works.”

Raney said he would not exploit his opponent’s youth and inexperience for political purposes.
[Paraphrased from a Ronald Regan quote]

Stuart Smedley, Garland County Seated Coroner

Coroner Smedley has an opponent, but his opponent elected not to attend the forum.

The coroner praised Larry Raney. Smedley said he previously issued an invitation to all the Garland County J.P.’s to visit his office so they could learn about the coroner’s job. Out of all 13, the only one to do so was J.P. Larry Raney. The coroner said he appreciated this.



Stuart Smedley, Garland County Seated Coroner

“I am a lifelong resident of Garland County. I remember when Hot Springs Village was not here. I ran around in these woods before there were any roads.” He said his biggest supporter is his mother and he owes everything to her.

He has been with the coroner’s office since 2001. In 2007, he became the Garland County Coroner.

“This election is about experience. That is the bottom line.”

- “I am nationally certified as a Medical/legal Death Investigator.”

- “I am also Arkansas certified Death Investigator.”
- Co-author or co-developer of the Arkansas Death Investigation Course and one of only three instructors for the state for the course
- Certified Instructor for Medical and Death Investigation Topics for the Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy
- Nationally and state-certified paramedic – one of the oldest paramedics in the state
- On the Executive Board for the Arkansas Coroners Association, in addition to the Education Committee and Legislative Committee
- First coroner’s office in Arkansas to have all Deputy Coroners certified with Arkansas, long before it was required
- Member of International Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners
- Additional education through the Arkansas Fire Academy and past instructor
- Firefighter and President of the Board for the Fountain Lake Fire Department for several years

“Community service, service to Garland County is something I have done my entire working career.”

What is a major challenge of the office you seek and how would you address it?

“The major issue that we have is personnel. We are usually the second busiest coroner’s office in the state of Arkansas....We had 1,600 calls last year.” He said they are well over 600 calls this year. Part of the reason for this is the geriatric community and tourism. Additionally, St. Vincents and National Park are receiving facilities for the southwest corner of the state, and a lot of cases come in that were airlifted from elsewhere.

“The challenge, personnel-wise, [is that] there is not a long list of people at the door, beating it down and trying to get a job at the coroner’s office. Where else can you wake up in the middle of the night at all times of the day and night and go deal with death? Deal with a grieving family. When we see people, it is at the worst day of their life.”

What separates you from your primary opponent?

“Experience. The two opponents that I have, one I don’t know at all. Have never met him. The other one, the Republican opponent that I have, I know him well, worked with him for years. He is the manager at a funeral home and I am not here to say anything at all bad about him. I worked with him for years.”

“The experience that I have and my staff has, exceeds anything that anybody else can bring to the table.”

Cheryl Dowden, Hot Springs Village Gazette, April 2, 2022

Photography by Joe Dowden

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Date Created

04/02/2022

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