

COALITION FOR A BETTER MEMPHIS
Shelby County Sheriff Candidate Questionnaire
Election Date: May 4, 2010

I use the name **Bobby Simmons** in all my professional and personal correspondence. My name is **Robert James Simmons, Jr.** for tax and social security purposes.

1. QUALIFICATIONS AND BACKGROUND

Qualifications: Describe briefly your qualifications for holding the office of Shelby County sheriff. (Please answer in the space below. You may attach a resume or other description to provide us with additional detail.) **Experience coupled with continuous professional training highly qualifies me for this office. I have thirty-five years of professional law enforcement experience with the Shelby County Sheriff's Office as an officer and commander in the following divisions: Commander of the Metro DUI division, a unit that is multi-jurisdictional and responsible for serving the entire metro area. Records and Identification, an area where initial processing of individuals occurs. This experience in R and I helps me to communicate critical information to those under my command about the criminal behavior of suspects and their aliases while making pursuits and arrests. Having the knowledge of fingerprinting, certification of witnesses and suspects, background checks, and other archives is of great assistance to the officers on the streets. I know this because I served in Patrol for many years. I have worked in the Jail with intake and surveillance of prisoners on a daily basis. I know the dangers and procedures in the jail division from personal experience and when guidance is needed, I can speak from the voice of incident and know-how. I will continue to follow the CALEA guidance that accredited our jail during the current administration. As Commander in the Courts, both Civil and Criminal, I know the**

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routines, judges, and personnel in that division and have professional rapport with all employees who manage this division. I have many stories to relate about undercover sting operations in all areas of the county, too many to elaborate here. I have worked in Homicide, Crime Prevention, and Director of School Officers and Educational Outreach. While in Crime Prevention, I helped draft and administer a large grant that allowed the purchase of McGruff, the robotic Crime Dog, and several buses for Crime Prevention educational purposes. I also started Senior Citizens Crime Watch many years ago and have been an administrative contact for Neighborhood Watch Associations across Shelby County. Every aspect of my experience, training, and background is associated with educating the public in ways to keep safe and keep Public Safety as our top priority.

2. What events or experiences caused you to decide to run for this office? I have worked for eight sheriffs in my tenure and have learned what makes an effective leader. From each one I have learned to trust, honor, delegate, go to the scene and see for myself, reflect to know how to improve, and treat people the way I want to be treated. Having served as Captain and Commander in so many areas in the Sheriff's Office, I know I have the experience to be the Sheriff. I have compassion when necessary and no leniency when the situation requires extreme enforcement. I have been elected twice to serve as an Alderman in Bartlett and I have gained administrative and public service experience here too. As an elective official I have gained public trust to fulfill my duties without following the status quo. I ask questions and vote my conscience to affect the common good. I know that there are two sides to every story and I know the laws. As Sheriff, I will lead with compassion and kindness, coupled with due diligence in my duties and in finding the truth and following the highest standards set forth for law enforcement agencies.

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2. VISION AND STRATEGIES

1. Law enforcement philosophy: What is the best way of reducing crime in a community? **My goals for reducing crime are centered on three action words: Educate, Inspire, and Enforce. With this simple message I want to: educate citizens on ways to avoid becoming victims; inspire the Department to be role models of impeccable values; enforce the law. As Sheriff of Shelby County I plan to increase the quantity and utilize one of our greatest resources—our volunteers--- to increase the outreach efforts of the Sheriff's Office. Our reserves deputies, senior citizens crime watch, emergency services personnel, and special services volunteers are fully trained personnel who love their community and want to serve their fellow citizens. Special Services are highly effective in providing protection to our elderly citizens who are often the most vulnerable victims to criminals. Citizens should feel that they contribute to the prevention of crimes.**

What best practices should we be considering, in Shelby County that have reduced crime in comparable counties? **Looking at statistical patterns to see where incidence of crime is high, I use data to inform my decisions to keep citizens safe. Building relationships with the community is critical to the success of law enforcement agencies. As a best practice, the community outreach programs currently in place will continue to be a close link and positive relationship with the sheriff's office. I know how to effectively encourage employees to feel they are important and no person or position is expendable. Giving others under my authority the tools they needed to do the job is also one of my strengths. If they succeed, we all succeed. I have worked relentlessly to create a positive working relationship with my staff and have encouraged them to do likewise. As a captain and commander, I**

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know the importance of keeping morale high, making impeccable moral decisions, while remaining relentless in preparation to be a commander that other officers respect. What is the best role for the sheriff's department in this? Past experiences in law enforcement have taught me to identify potential trouble before it occurs. The sheriff must consider officer safety at all times. Analyzing workloads, considering specialized assignments, and creating enthusiasm for citizens to become members of crime prevention programs are key duties of the sheriff. There are national standards with implementation procedures to follow in making decisions that effect the department and the citizens. The CALEA standards will be present in each department and employees and officers will establish these standards in their daily duties.

2. Management philosophy: What is the best way of managing a law enforcement agency with several distinct missions, including law enforcement and jail management? **In order to manage the Sheriff's Office, the revenue and infrastructure must be in place to build and maintain a safe community. Our officers, our greatest resource, must continue to have professional development to provide them with the technology, psychology, and physical aptitude to do their jobs effectively. Maintaining high morale is sometimes difficult in areas like the jail where "serving" the clientele is not always pleasant. Jailers, patrolmen, SWAT, and many other service personnel perform difficult and dangerous duties with dedication to public safety. Keeping the jail accredited by proper state and federal authorities as well as CALEA accreditation standards will also be a working priority.**

3. Jail costs: How can the jail be managed humanely, efficiently and effectively – and cost less money? **Currently there is a manual of standard operating procedures written under the direction of Sheriff Luttrell and these procedures positively insured the Sheriff's office**

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highest rating for jail operations and accreditation in the country. Having a program like this in place that is cost effective and requires strict procedures for proper compliance is an advantage for the next sheriff. These standard operation procedures will be strictly adhered to by my administration and we will closely monitor and maintain CALEA standards. As increased efforts in crime prevention help lower crime rates, it is my hope that the jail might see a decrease in the number of those being incarcerated. I am, however, a realist with reserved optimism and I plan to study ways that other large municipalities have reduced the budgetary spending in their jails. The “tent city” idea made good sense to me in that nobody wanted to return to a tent city jail where temperatures soared as high as those suffered by our soldiers in the Middle East. Reducing recidivism is a strong consideration when maintaining a jail. Our current Judge Tim Dwyer has the most effective and merciful program for lowering the numbers in our jails while also offering an incentive for no recidivism. I invited had him speak to various municipal and service oriented groups to educate the public about reducing drug offenders in our county. In addressing the “human” aspect of this question, I do not believe that criminals deserve better living conditions than the victims whom they violated. Poor people who are violated by those in the jail must suffer the fear of further attack, may be wondering where their next meal is coming from, and may not have utilities, television, cable, and a warm or cool place to dwell. I know there are agencies in place to protect the rights of criminals, and these agencies would be quick to come to their aid. In a Southern metropolitan area like Shelby County, I believe that working to maintain socio-economic relationships with all citizens is the best philosophy. I have always treated prisoners with respect and have been

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model in my behavior toward them. I will expect this respect to be mutual with officers and prisoners as well.

3. IMPROVING THE SYSTEM

Shrinking serve area: How can you manage the law-enforcement side of the sheriff's department as city annexations shrink its service area? **I will manage the law enforcement with special expertise in public safety, homeland security, and crime prevention. As a member of the Tennessee Municipal League and the National League of Cities, I network on the state and national level to bring the most current and effective ideas, programs, and services to our citizens in unincorporated areas as well as municipalities and the city of Memphis. Second tier cities such as Bartlett, Collierville, Germantown, and Millington have their own police and firemen, and I will communicate daily with necessary personnel to keep services and networking lines open with my department personnel. Judges and jails in these second tier cities are critical to reducing the workload of Shelby County courts and incarceration facilities and I intend to recognize and praise their efforts often. Crime knows no boundaries and law enforcement agencies must work together to stop criminals as they pass from Arlington to Bartlett and into Memphis. I am neither territorial nor power hungry and I gladly accept the assistance of local police forces in solving crimes that affect everyone. I have gained experience and knowledge while interacting with the local community in listening to and solving citizens' concerns on a city and county level. Networking on local, state, and national level to bring services to our citizens has given me experience in setting an agenda and implementing action plans to accomplish goals in neighborhood associations and schools. Diplomacy and accurate information are required**

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when addressing commissioners and mayors who control the budget. I have been on both sides of the podium when asking and granting budget considerations. I use common sense in spending, and place priority in areas that serve the greatest good. Annexation from municipalities has declined and the Sheriff's Office has sole jurisdiction of 358 square miles as our service area. Although the area may be decreasing in land area, the number of citizens and businesses has increased. Unincorporated areas still exist and those areas will continue to receive our services and programs targeted for schools, neighborhoods, and businesses.

2.Community relations: What are the best ways of strengthening relations between the sheriff's department and the diverse communities it serves? There is currently strong public confidence in the Shelby County Sheriff's office, a division of law enforcement I have served for 35 years. Diverse populations of citizens have earned our trust that language, skin color, and housing does not cause anyone to be mistreated or disrespected under the law. My wife has served as an educator for 31 years in an urban area that is riddled with poverty, gangs, and welfare. We often discuss this diversity in our city and know that education programs are the key to eliminate the divisiveness that causes mistrust. Diversity in our community is a good quality that we must embrace and teaching tolerance for our differences is the best way to strengthen our community. Celebrations of culture in the Hispanic, white, black, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, Jewish, Buddhist and all other cultures and religions are avenues for strengthening our relationships with one another. Political parties, schools, neighborhood associations, as well as the Sheriff's community outreach programs should embrace the differences of our children and their families and start very early to show our youth that we as adults will love and protect all the children in our community. Respect

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and tolerance for difference is the key to strong relationships, and as Shelby County's next sheriff, I will lead with this message throughout the county.

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