

**COLORADO
CRIMINAL
JUSTICE
REFORM
COALITION**

MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT

Be Sure To Vote



2ND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

BALLOTS ARE MAILED OUT: JUNE 3RD, 2024

LAST DAY TO MAIL YOUR BALLOT: JUNE 17TH, 2024

POLLS CLOSE AT 7 PM ON JUNE 25TH, 2024

Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition

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Denver Election Hotline

Toll Free: 720-913-8683



The District Attorney (DA) is one of the most powerful players in the criminal legal system who politically has a lot of decision-making authority and responsibility. They are also elected officials, but oftentimes too little information is known about DA candidates or decisions they makes once elected.

In 2016, CCJRC launched its “KNOW YOUR DISTRICT ATTORNEY (DA)” campaign to help voters be more educated about DA candidates, to promote more community engagement, and improve transparency, accountability, and relationships with elected District Attorneys. Go to www.ccjrc.org to learn more and get involved.

DID YOU KNOW:

DAs have decision-making power to determine:

- Whether or not to file criminal charges
- Plea-bargaining
- Whether or not a diversion program is offered and who is eligible.
- Sentencing and bond recommendations

DAs have power and influence beyond the courtroom:

- Public policy at the state and local level
- State and local budgets
- Public opinion on safety, equity, and justice issues
- Collaberating with other government and elected officials

In 2024, there are two candidates running for District Attorney in the 2nd Judicial District (JD2): John Walsh and Leora Joseph. No Republicans filed to run in the race for so, whoever wins the Democrat primary on June 25th, 2024 will be the next DA for JD2.

CCJRC submitted a written candidate questionnaire to both candidates. This Voter Guide contains submitted responses which are reprinted verbatim, in their entirety, and candidate profiles from their websites. Candidate responses are presented in order of how they appear on June's ballot. We greatly thank the candidates for their participation.

1.) John Walsh (D) page 2-7

2.) Leora Joseph (D) page 8-11

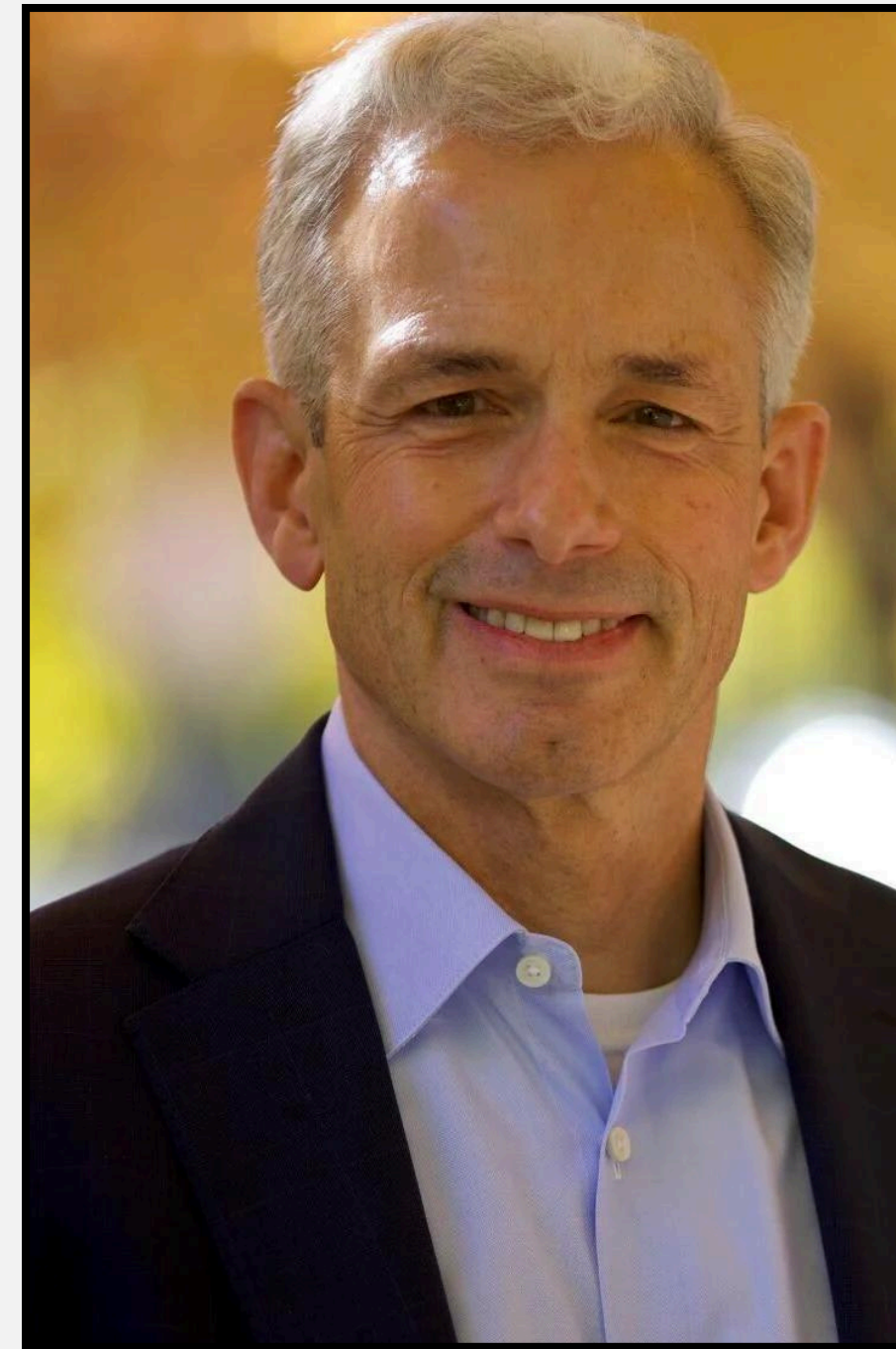
CCJRC publishes this District Attorney Voter Guide for educational purposes only. CCJRC is a nonpartisan 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our voter engagement, voter education, get-out-the-vote, and voter protection activities will be conducted in a nonpartisan manner. CCJRC will not express support or opposition for any particular candidate or party.

BIOGRAPHY

Experienced Leader

John moved to Denver with his family at the age of 12, and he has dedicated his life to service here. John and his wife have spent decades in Denver, raising their three children, graduates of the Denver Public Schools. John has an accomplished legal record, having won national level cases against big banks, Wall Street, and major pharmaceutical companies.

John has long been a staunch advocate for sentencing reforms. He worked on President Obama's clemency project, working to reduce long, nonviolent drug offenses. He is a fervent believer in democracy, and his legal expertise was showcased when he successfully represented the Biden campaign and protected our democracy by fighting the post-2020 election cases in Michigan that challenged President-elect Joe Biden's win. John served as Vice-Chair of the Denver Public Safety Review Commission – Denver's original civilian oversight board for police and public safety agencies. He has worked tirelessly advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and reproductive rights in the federal courts and before the U.S. Supreme Court. John has helped found and lead community nonprofits focused on early childhood education, and advises schools that offer dual language education. His lifetime of community and public service reflects his unwavering dedication to justice and to making our city, state and country a better place.



Public Service

President Barack Obama appointed John as the top federal prosecutor for Colorado – U.S. Attorney – from 2010 to 2016. In this role he held national leadership positions for the Department of Justice, most prominently as the chair of the U.S. Attorney General's Advisory Committee of US Attorneys. His influence and impact had a global reach, with expertise in addressing fraud and white-collar crime. He also co-chaired national efforts to combat securities fraud, helped lead the nationwide effort to hold big financial institutions responsible for their actions leading to the 2008 financial crisis, and worked tirelessly with Colorado state and local officials to improve the quality of public safety in our state. John made community outreach and cooperation a centerpiece of his work as U.S. Attorney, founding and championing programs to keep religious institutions of all faiths safe against hate crimes.

John's entire career has reflected his commitment to public service. After law school, he served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Los Angeles. Over eight years, he rose to the position of Chief of the Major Frauds Section, focusing on white-collar crime and frauds. When he returned to Denver in 1995, he dedicated over 15 years at two of Denver's most prestigious law firms, Hill & Robbins and Holland & Hart, where he specialized in business litigation, securities, and conducting critical internal investigations.

As a fluent Spanish speaker, Walsh has broken down linguistic barriers to increase impact and outreach. He is deeply involved in the Denver community, including serving on the American Bar Association's Mexico Committee and the board of Denver's Escuela de Guadalupe. Walsh helped found (and now serves on the board of directors) Invest in Kids, a Colorado nonprofit focused on early childhood healthcare and education.

Biography Source: <https://www.walshfordenver.com>

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES: JOHN WALSH

1.) Why are you running for District Attorney, including what qualifications do you bring to this elected position, and what will be the priorities of your administration, including any areas of improvement and measures of success?

Denver is my hometown and I care deeply about this city and its people. My wife and I have lived in Denver's Park Hill neighborhood for nearly 30 years, raising three children, all DPS graduates.

I am running to be Denver DA because Denver is at a critical moment - we need to face and overcome the community safety issues of recent years, and make Denver a safer and more just city for everyone. This means both enforcing the law and working closely with the community to prevent crime and improve our criminal justice system.

I have served as a federal prosecutor and a supervisor of prosecutors for many years. In 2010, based on my experience, President Obama named me Colorado's U.S. Attorney, Colorado's chief federal prosecutor. I served from 2010 to 2016. Attorneys General Holder and Lynch each asked me to chair their national advisory committee of U.S. Attorneys.

In addition, I have had an extensive career in private practice, representing individuals and businesses. I have represented criminal defendants - an experience that made me a better U.S. Attorney and will make me a better DA.

During that time, I continued to work to serve our community. I helped found Invest in Kids - an early childhood education nonprofit. I speak Spanish fluently, and have worked with the Latino community in Denver my entire life, most recently as board chair of Escuela de Guadalupe, a Denver dual language school. From 2003 to 2005, I was Vice Chair of the Public Safety Review Commission, Denver's civilian oversight board for law enforcement at that time. In 2023, Colorado LawWeek named me "Lawyer of the Year," focused on community service.

I am a lifelong Democrat, serving as co-Captain of House District 7B, state Platform Committee Chair in 2008, and Attorney General Weiser's 2018 campaign treasurer. I won the Denver Democratic Assembly, and will be the "top line" of the June primary ballot.

As DA, I will combine firm, fair enforcement with a broad community engagement strategy to prevent crime and improve the fairness of our criminal justice system. My priorities are:

- Violent crime: Establish a violent crime task force to work with law enforcement and the community with a targeted enforcement strategy, combined with expanded community youth development and youth violence prevention programs.*
- The fentanyl epidemic and mental health issues: Expand drug court programs to a focus on substance abuse and mental health treatment programs, combined with targeted enforcement of higher-level drug dealers.*
- Car theft and catalytic converter theft: Establish a motor vehicle theft task force to work with the city to target organized crime car theft rings, along with prevention.*
- Supporting the victims of crime: Ensure crime victims are heard, supported and protected by the DA's office.*
- Earning the trust of the community by improving our criminal justice system: Work with the community - including the CCJRC - to expand criminal justice reform programs like restorative justice, diversion programs and data transparency, and focus on police training, policy and*

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES: JOHN WALSH

2.) How would you describe your idea of justice, the purposes of sentencing, and whether you believe our current system is meeting that ideal in the 2nd Judicial District?

The job of the District Attorney is to do justice, which means applying the law fairly and effectively so as to protect the community and the victims of crime, while protecting the rights of all people, including those accused of crimes. Fundamentally, it means ensuring that communities and residents are safe -- and feel safe -- in their homes and in their neighborhoods and in the City, and that their children are safe when they go to school, while constantly working to improve fairness and equity in our legal system and the equal protection of the law for all.

To accomplish these crucial goals while working to improve the criminal justice system and make it more equitable -- justice reform -- I believe that the DA's Office must bring a combined strategy of enforcing the law to protect people and also working tirelessly to address the root causes of crime, and giving people caught up in the criminal justice system the opportunity to lead productive lives. We must work closely with community, neighborhood organizations and the schools on an array of programs and initiatives, including working with and expanding prevention programs, Restorative Justice programs, diversion programs, youth development and intervention programs, working to expand community-based harm reduction, substance use disorder and mental health treatment programs, strengthening our state's "re-entry" programs for people completing terms of incarceration, ensuring greater transparency in the work the DA's office does (consistent with legal requirements), a commitment to review and monitor data on the office's work to address potential disparate treatment of the accused and address implicit bias, and a review and potential systematic revision of our pretrial bail/bond programs. I would note that I am a fluent Spanish speaker and am committed to working with that underserved community -- and others -- to bring these programs to them in a systematic way.

I believe that criminal sentencing should seek to protect the community, and do so in a way that is fair and not unnecessarily harsh to the offender, in a manner that maximizes the successful future reintegration of the offender into society. This work is not an abstraction for me: I was heavily involved working with President Obama's clemency program and sentencing reform and reentry program efforts. Our goal should be to bring down the recidivism rate in Colorado from the current far-too-high 50% rate. Diversion and restorative justice programs that protect the community while keeping lower-level, non-violent offenders out of the criminal justice system are an important part of this approach. We have a lot of room for improvement.

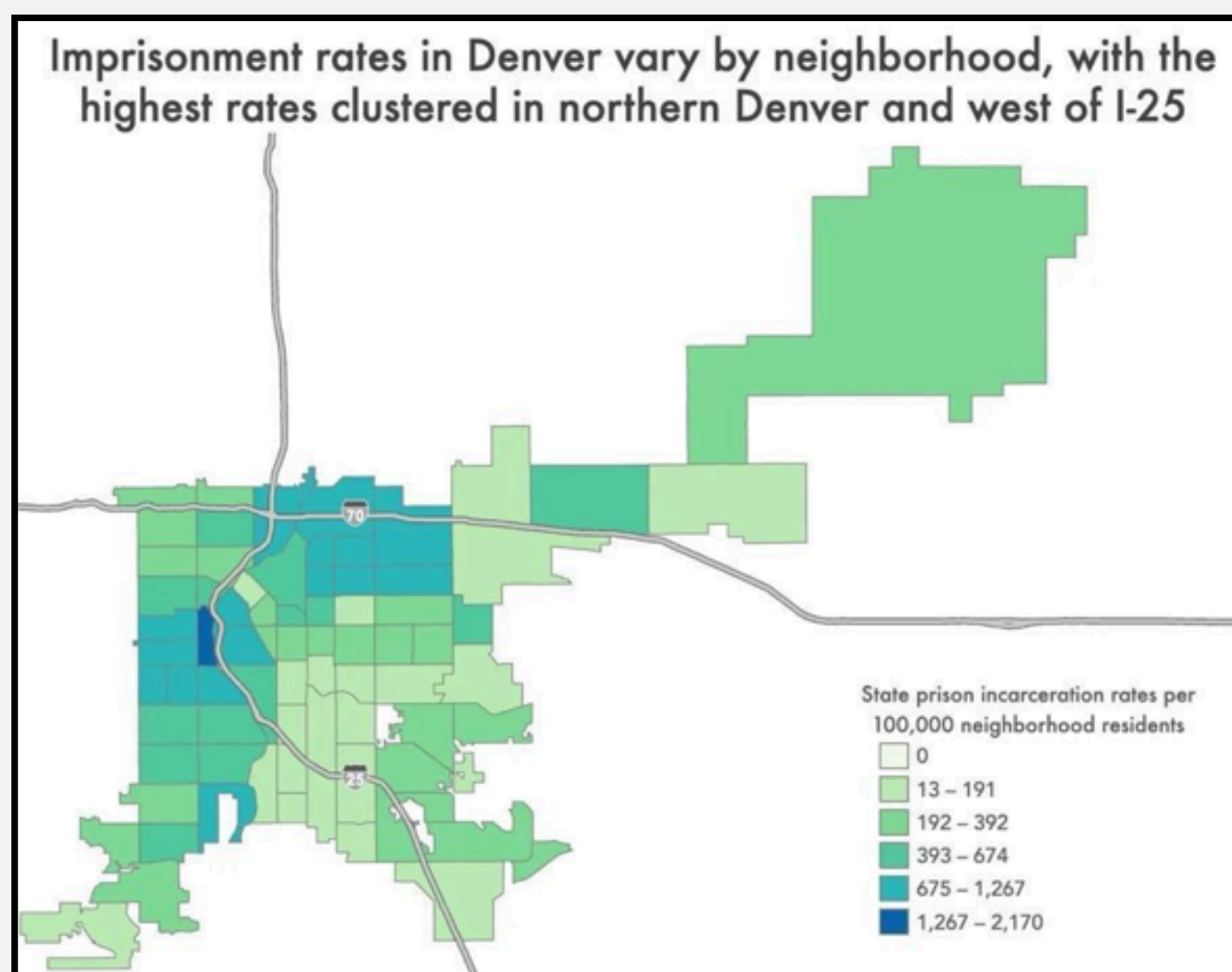
3.) Denver sentences a lot of people to prison, second only to El Paso County and almost twice as many as Arapahoe County. Currently, the Colorado Department of Corrections is facing a severe staffing crisis, resulting in dire conditions for both inmates and staff. Would you support expanding other sentencing options to help alleviate the strain on DOC and improve access to treatment and programs for defendants?

Yes - as I describe in my answer to question #2 above, I believe we should be working to explore a broad range of sentencing options, consistent with ensuring community safety and fairness to the accused, and should be diverting defendants into treatment programs where possible as well.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES: JOHN WALSH

4.) According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes of these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map?

All people should and must receive equal treatment and the equal protection of the law. The causes and sources of these different incarceration rates run deep in our society, and include long-standing socioeconomic disparities, questions of race and ethnicity, including bias and implicit bias, among other factors. Some neighborhoods, tragically, in fact face higher crime rates. Fundamentally, each case must be assessed, handled and resolved on its own merits, in a way that is consistent with the way similar cases are handled across the city. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the elected DA to make sure this is the case, a responsibility I will take on with the utmost seriousness. I strongly believe in data transparency and the review of data to identify and then work to correct systemic disparities, and would implement an ongoing data analysis effort to do so. Addressing these issues also includes implicit bias training and policies in the DA's office, and working with the police department on training and policy development to ensure that day-to-day enforcement is equitable and even-handed.



Source: "Where people in prison come from: The geography of mass incarceration in Colorado." (Prison Policy Initiative and Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition Widra, E. & C. Donner (July 2022))

5.) People with a criminal conviction can face long-term barriers to housing, employment, and other collateral consequences because of having a criminal record. What, if any, strategies would you support that could mitigate unnecessary collateral consequences?

Helping people with criminal convictions become successful, contributing members of our society is crucial both because it is fair and the right thing to do, and also because it will reduce and prevent crime by giving convicted people alternatives to reengaging in criminal conduct after their release. I worked extensively as U.S. Attorney on these issues as part of President Obama's push to expand re-entry programs and resources. To accomplish this as DA, I will work to ensure Colorado expands and improves its reentry programs, as well as working closely with nonprofit reentry groups like "Breakthrough," measures like the "ban the box" effort to improve the employment prospects of people with nonviolent convictions, and also, programs to expunge non-violent conviction records where consistent with public safety.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES: JOHN WALSH

6.) What is your perspective on the availability and adequacy of crime survivor services in general, and specifically what steps would you take to better meet the needs of underserved crime survivors? (By underserved, we mean low-income people, people of color, men, LGBTQ+, and crime survivors who also have a criminal background.)

I am deeply committed to hearing, supporting and protecting the survivors/victims of crime, whatever their background, and particularly those who are from underserved communities. The DA's office has a dedicated staff of victim advocates, and at the same time, we have much work to do to support underserved populations. That means ensuring that the DA's office overall – prosecutors, victim advocates, staff – are aware of and attuned to the needs of underserved populations, and that the DA's office includes people who reflect those underserved populations. As just one example, as a fluent Spanish speaker, I am constantly struck by the fact that our criminal justice system overall does not adequately hear, support and protect Spanish speaking survivors of crime – a community that at times feels overlooked and even ignored. I am committed to addressing these issues systematically.

7.) There is very little information available to the public about the decision-making and outcomes of the District Attorney's Office. What would you do to improve the transparency of the District Attorney's Office, including what data you would make available to the public, what method you would use to inform the public, and what formal opportunities you would put in place to receive community input?

In recent years, DA's offices across Colorado, including the Denver DA's office, have set up public "data dashboards" with statistical information about cases, outcomes, etc. These data dashboards are in version "1.0," however, and we need to expand and improve them to greatly increase data transparency. That means focusing on what data is actually being collected in the first place, and expanding that collection, as well as ensuring that data transparency efforts protect the rights of the accused and victims of crime as well. This should include making public more information regarding charges brought and dismissed, and a greater array of demographic information, consistent with the rights of the accused and victims. I also strongly believe that the DA should be actively engaged in answering questions from the community, and would reinstitute a monthly or quarterly podcast or television program on criminal justice issues as DA, as well as constant community and media outreach.

8.) If elected DA, what would be your approach to defendants whose criminal conduct is solely or largely related to an underlying addiction or mental illness?

In every case where a defendant's conduct is solely or largely related to an underlying addiction or mental illness, we should be working to provide treatment to that defendant as part of any case resolution – always working to ensure community safety in that process. In some instances of lower-level, non-violent offenses, this will result in "diversion" from the criminal justice system entirely and into treatment programs – where consistent with protecting community safety. In other cases, it will involve case resolutions that contemplate treatment as a condition of probation or other non-incarceration sentencing option. And in cases where the severity of the crime and community safety requires incarceration, treatment should be a part of those sentences as well.

In Colorado, we face a serious shortfall in community-based substance use and mental health treatment programs, and as DA, I will advocate for the expansion of funding for those programs. Colorado has one of the longest wait times for treatment beds to restore the competency of defendants with mental illness – the state is in violation of a federal consent decree on this issue – and we need to consider alternatives to that still-broken system. In addition, I believe in the expansion and improvement of the Denver drug court and competency courts to help implement these critical approaches. And programs like the "STAR" alternative response program and Colorado's "Bridges" programs should be expanded so as to keep people suffering from mental health issues out of the criminal justice system to begin with – a critical step to address these serious issues.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES: JOHN WALSH

9.) If elected DA, what concrete steps will you take to implement alternatives to cash bail so that people aren't treated differently based on their financial resources, or lack thereof?

Our bond system needs systemic review and reform, with an eye toward ensuring that offenders who do not pose a risk to the community are not held on low-level bonds merely because they are without financial resources, and at the same time, that serious offenders who do pose a risk to the community are not released merely because they are wealthy or have access to financial resources. This could mean an end to cash bail, but only as part of a broader overall reform that ensures community safety, for example, along the lines of recent bond reform measures in New Jersey or Illinois.

In addition, I will work with the DA's office to ensure that we are reviewing bonds on an ongoing, monthly basis, and will work with the Sheriff's Department to ensure that nonviolent offenders who do not pose a risk to the community or risk of flight are not held in jail for failure to post low dollar bonds. At the same time, it is important to ensure that defendants who do pose a risk to the community are given bonds adequate to protect the community.

LEORA JOSEPH

BIOGRAPHY

Throughout her career, Leora Joseph has fought for justice for the most vulnerable people caught in the complex criminal justice system. Her passion is driven by her faith and the obligation to repair the world. As an attorney, Leora has served in every aspect of public service that touches the criminal justice system— from prosecuting sexual assault cases, serving as Chief of Staff to the Colorado Attorney General, overseeing an urban police department, and transforming the systems that connect the justice system with the mental health system.

Leora has amassed high-level leadership experience, including supervising special victims units and human trafficking units in urban district attorney's offices, managing a staff of approximately 250 lawyers as Chief of Staff for the Colorado Attorney General, managing a multi-million dollar budget at the state level, and overseeing a 50-person police department in the heart of downtown Denver. In each of these roles, victims and individuals impacted by crimes have consistently been at the center of Leora's work. She has met with over 1,000 sexual assault victims and served on Colorado's Child Fatality Review Board.



Throughout these experiences, Leora has become deeply aware of the gaps in the criminal justice system and how to address them to create a system that provides everyone with equal access to justice. She is an experienced manager who has supervised teams of lawyers, policy-makers, and advocates engaged in the important and intense work that make up different aspects of the criminal justice system. She currently oversees the state's Office of Civil and Forensic Mental Health where she is focusing on transformational change in helping those with severe mental illness caught up in the criminal justice system.

Leora is highly respected in her field and was awarded the Colorado Woman Lawyer of the Year in 2016 and the Ralph Martin Prosecutor of the Year in 2008. She has shared her expertise as a frequent lecturer at renowned institutions such as the University of Colorado Denver and Harvard Law School.

Leora is most proud of her three children; motherhood continues to teach her about leadership, service and hope.

Biography Source: <http://www.leorafordistrictattorney.com>

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES: LEORA JOSEPH

1.) Why are you running for District Attorney, including what qualifications you bring to this elected position, and what will be the priorities of your administration, including any areas of improvement and measures of success?

I'm running to be the next Denver DA because I love Denver, and I have real plans to help our city. I'm the only candidate in the race with experience working in District Attorney's offices, and supporting victims and community. It's my current role in the Governor's administration, overseeing how our state mental health system interacts with the courts, where I believe my experience will be the most helpful. I plan to create real pathways to treatment for those suffering from severe mental illness and substance misuse disorder.

I will prioritize victims and make sure that community has a seat at the table in the DA's office. My priority is ending the cycle of recidivism, with people moving in and out of jail - tracking recidivism will be one of the determinants of a successful administration.

2.) How would you describe your idea of justice, the purposes of sentencing, and whether you believe our current system is meeting that ideal in the 2nd Judicial District?

I believe that justice is falling short in the 2nd Judicial District. In my 8 months of campaigning, I have learned, seen and experienced that nobody feels the system is working: not victims, people accused of crime, the police, or even judges. All are leary of the efficacy of our justice system. To me, justice means means that there is an ethical, impartial system that protects individuals. Criminal justice sentencing has many important goals, including accountability, rehabilitation, community safety, restorative justice, and offering people a second chance.

3.) Denver sentences a lot of people to prison, second only to El Paso County and almost twice as many as Arapahoe County. Currently, the Colorado Department of Corrections is facing a severe staffing crisis, resulting in dire conditions for both inmates and staff. Would you support expanding other sentencing options to help alleviate the strain on DOC and improve access to treatment and programs for defendants?

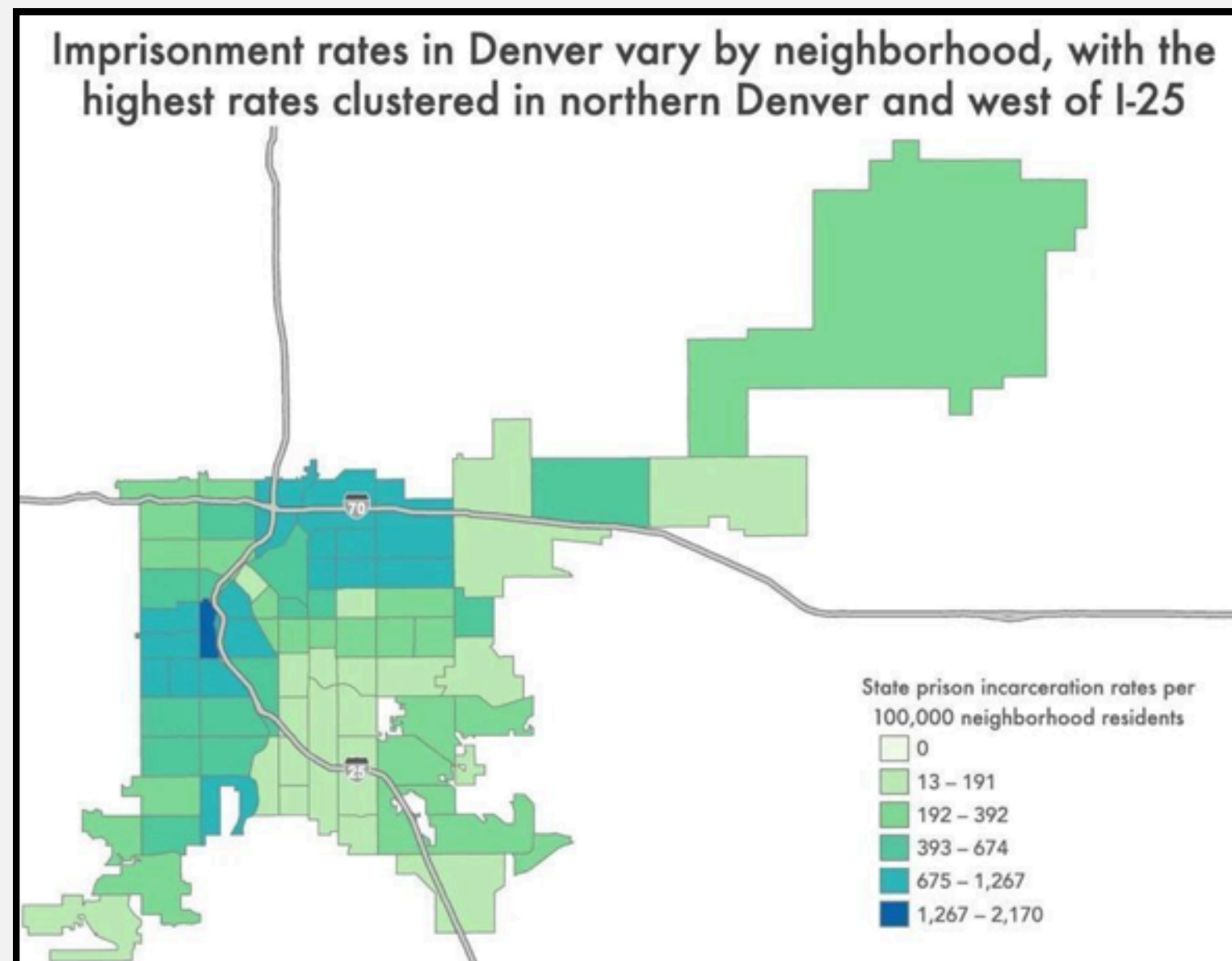
As a country, we spend close to \$100 billion a year on mass incarceration, which serves neither to make anyone safer, nor rehabilitate the convicted for re-entry. One of the cornerstones of my campaign is to break the mental-illness-to-prison pipeline, and create real pathways to treatment.

I would support expanding other sentencing options to alleviate strain on DOC, and improve access to treatment and programs for defendants.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES: LEORA JOSEPH

4.) According to a recent report, different neighborhoods in Denver have much higher incarceration rates in state prison. What do you think are the causes of these differences and what strategies will your administration deploy, if any, in response to this Denver map?

There are many root causes of mass incarceration, with socioeconomic disparity as one of the biggest drivers of these disparate outcomes and high incarceration levels. Racial bias, including implicit bias, is another driver of disparate incarceration. For the DA's office to reduce unfair penalties, I will make data transparency a priority, highlighting conviction and sentencing information for the public. I also plan to have a robust community engagement office that reflects the diversity of the people we serve.



Source: "Where people in prison come from: The geography of mass incarceration in Colorado." (Widra, E. & C. Donner, Prison Policy Initiative and Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition (July 2022))

5.) People with a criminal conviction can face long-term barriers to housing, employment, and other collateral consequences because of having a criminal record. What, if any, strategies would you support that could mitigate unnecessary collateral consequences?

For re-entry and rehabilitation to be successful, the DA must partner with community organizations that focus on this work. I will work and learn with community to develop better practices for expungement of crimes of poverty and desperation, and push for their more frequent use.

6.) What is your perspective on the availability and adequacy of crime survivor services in general, and specifically, what steps would you take to better meet the needs of underserved crime survivors? (By underserved, we mean low-income people, people of color, men, LGBTQ+, and crime survivors who also have a criminal background.)

Protecting victims has been the bulk of my work for over twenty years in DA's offices, and I believe that victims need prosecutors who are specialized in trauma and victimization. Prosecutors must understand these important dynamics to help victims receive the justice they deserve. I will dedicate resources to make sure victims have strong support as they navigate their own interaction with the criminal justice system as victims.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES: LEORA JOSEPH

7.) There is very little information available to the public about the decision-making and outcomes of the District Attorney's Office. What would you do to improve the transparency of the District Attorney's Office, including what data would you make available to the public, what method would you use to inform the public, and what formal opportunities would you put in place to receive community input?

Improving access to whatever data is allowed to be shared under existing law via an improved dashboard is a commitment I make to Denver. I will create a community engagement program which includes representation from community organizations and better develop the lens through which the DA's office understands crime. I plan to have the nation's first Director of Police Accountability to help inform decisions, as well as a citizen's review board to review DA's office decisions. Transparency isn't issuing a press release. Instead, my office will explain decisions and their reasoning.

8.) If elected DA, what would be your approach to defendants whose criminal conduct is solely or largely related to an underlying addiction or mental illness?

In my current role as director of the state Office of Civil and Forensic Mental Health, I am committed to moving people with severe mental illness and substance misuse disorder into real treatment. Jail can't be our main method for mental health treatment, and I will continue this focus on what I believe is transformational work as DA.

9.) If elected DA, what concrete steps will you take to implement alternatives to cash bail so that people aren't treated differently based on their financial resources or lack thereof?

The entire bond system needs to be overhauled. The size of a person's bank account shouldn't determine who will be detained pre-trial. Instead, the focus on pre-trial detention needs to be severity of the crime, criminogenic risk, and efficacy of available alternatives to pre-trial incarceration.

A stylized silhouette of a city skyline in shades of blue, positioned at the top of the page. The word "DISCLAIMER" is written in large, bold, dark blue capital letters across the bottom of this graphic.

DISCLAIMER

DISCLAIMER:

The Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition is a 501c (3) non-partisan organization and does not support or oppose any candidates running for office. CCJRC requested that all candidate answers be kept to 500 words or less. All answers were published verbatim and in full, unless a response was over the 500 word limit at which point it was cut off at the 500-word mark.