

# CANDIDATE: JOYCE FARMER



Are you an active military member or veteran?

Yes

No

Educational Background (Please list all degrees and certifications)

I attended Morris College. After becoming a law enforcement officer, I obtained a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) certification, General Instructor Training (IT) Certification, Certify Peace officer for The State of Georgia, Management Certification 120, and Supervision Certification 120.

Have you run for office previously?

Yes

No

Please tell us about any volunteer work you've done in the last 5 years?

For the past five years, I have volunteered my services with the Order of the Eastern Star (OES), an organization of which I am a member.

We actively engage with the community, annually providing school supplies, participating in Toys for Tots, organizing an Easter egg hunt, and contributing to food drives to support those in need.

Additionally, for the past four years, I have been volunteering weekly with the East Point food drive, further extending my commitment to community service.

**Why are you interested in this office?**

I am running for Sheriff because I have the experience and plan to turn things around for the better. Currently, we have a Sheriff who is unprepared to effectively serve the needs of the residents of Fulton County; Inmates are dying unnecessarily, in many cases before they have their day in court.

Additionally, deputies and staff are leaving at dangerously high rates, creating safety concerns for inmates and the Sheriff's Office personnel. Furthermore, the current Sheriff has failed to responsibly manage the money of taxpayers, making large questionable purchases of luxury vehicles, and questionable equipment as well as demonstrating other spendthrift behavior. The citizens of Fulton County can do better, and I have the training, the experience, and the will to give the taxpayers the service they deserve.

**What interaction, if any, have you had with the Fulton County Jail?**

I dedicated 25 years of my 30-year law enforcement career to working within the Fulton County Jail. Through firsthand experience, I understand how the jail should be operated and managed, handling various roles such as Intake Booking, Inmate Housing and Safety, Visitation, Bonding, and Release. Moreover, I understand the mentality and mindset of the inmates, as well as the needs of the deputies, two critical points necessary for effective leadership.

**How long have you been a resident of Fulton County?**

I have been a resident of Fulton for over 18 years.

Tell us anything else you would like us to know about (150 words)

In my approach to leadership, courage is the cornerstone that propels me to make bold decisions, confront challenges, and navigate uncharted territories. I believe that true leadership requires the fortitude to tackle difficult situations head-on and the willingness to take risks in the pursuit of positive change.

The principles of excellence, reliability, and transparency serve as the foundation of my actions. I strive for excellence in every endeavor, aiming for the highest standards in performance and outcomes. Reliability underscores my commitment to delivering consistent, dependable results and fostering trust among those I serve. Transparency is key to building an open and accountable leadership style, ensuring that decisions are made with clarity and honesty.

Leading with courage and serving with dedication is not just a mantra or set of words for me; it encapsulates the core philosophy by which I live my life.

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## **Enforcement Duties**

The Sheriff's Office is responsible for administration and operation of the Fulton County Jail, providing security for all courtrooms and judges, and providing Warrant Service/Civil Process, and Special Operations and Investigative Units. The Sheriff also conducts Delinquent Property Tax Sales.

Considering all the duties the Sheriff's office is responsible for, training of its employees becomes particularly crucial.

Will you commit to annual training for personnel in the following areas:

- Bias (implicit and/or explicit) - YES
- Bias (implicit and/or explicit) - NO
- Mental health for detainees - YES
- Mental health for detainees - NO
- Mental health of Deputies and other staff - YES
- Mental health of Deputies and other staff - NO
- Use of force/de escalation - YES
- Use of force/de escalation - NO

What will be/are your policies related to the categories above?

Acknowledging the extensive responsibilities of the Sheriff's office, the training of its personnel holds particular importance. I am committed to implementing annual training programs covering bias, mental health considerations for detainees, the mental well-being of deputies and staff, as well as the use of force and de-escalation techniques.

My policies would include mandatory annual bias training for officers to promote fair practices. To establish community forums for open discussions on biases and understanding and implement a monitoring system with regular assessments to address and rectify any identified bias issues.

I would provide comprehensive mental health support for detainees by implementing a thorough mental health screening process during intake. Forging partnerships with mental health professionals for counseling and intervention. And training detention staff to recognize and support mental distress, fostering a compassionate environment.

The mental health and wellness policy for deputies and staff would be to prioritize mental health and well-being. Providing confidential counseling services addressing stress, trauma, and mental health concerns. Establish a wellness program focusing on physical and mental well-being, including stress management and resilience training. Conduct regular check-ins for mental health assessment. And most importantly encourage open communication and provide resources for seeking help.

Regarding the use of force and de-escalation, I would mandate ongoing training in de-escalation techniques and minimal force. Establish a transparent review process for accountability and improvement. And promote community policing to build positive relationships, reducing the need for forceful interventions.

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Collecting data is important as data analytics can uncover patterns that can ultimately improve safety and efficiency. Additionally, the sharing of data provides an accountability measure. Will you collect and share data openly in the following categories?

- Use of Force - YES
- Use of Force - NO
- In Custody Deaths - YES
- In Custody Deaths - NO
- Service contracts - YES
- Service contracts - NO

## Jail Management

The state of Georgia has the highest rate of correctional control in the country. Recently, efforts have been made to reduce the number of people held in the Fulton County Jail.

What plans, if any, do you have to reduce the population of the Fulton County Jail? (150 words)

My strategy involves implementing initiatives to reduce the Fulton County Jail population. I plan to divert non-violent offenders and those with misdemeanors or failure to appear through the Sheriff Relief Program, considering their charges and circumstances.

Collaborating with local cities and police chiefs is crucial to provide inmates with charge details and court dates. For first-time misdemeanor offenses, I'll explore a sheriff's release program, allowing individuals to be released on their recognizance, contingent upon meeting requirements.

Additionally, I propose working with judges, district attorneys, and solicitors to create a program for ineligible pretrial candidates, finding alternative solutions to minimize unnecessary incarceration.

Addressing mental health, I'll collaborate with mental health organizations to release inmates deemed stable, not a threat to society, allowing continued treatment outside of jail. This comprehensive approach aims to create an effective, humane system, prioritizing community safety and inmate well-being.

Do you think Fulton County needs to build a new \$2 billion jail?

Yes

No

Since 2022, over 20 people have died in the custody of the Fulton County Sheriff's department. What plans do you have to improve the safety of the Fulton County Jail? (150 words)

To address these challenges, a meticulous review of existing policies and procedures will be undertaken. Officers will undergo comprehensive training and retraining to ensure strict adherence to protocols, promoting correct job performance for the overall safety of the facility.

Security rounds for the general population, when outside cells, will occur visibly and unannounced every hour, and rounds for inmates in their cells will be conducted every 30 minutes. Additionally, specialized mental health security rounds will take place every 15 minutes.

This proactive approach, coupled with a commitment to continuous improvement, aims to create a secure environment within the correctional facility, fostering enhanced safety and well-being.

We are all aware that there is bias in policing in the United States. According to our 2023 report, "Breaking the Cycle, Exploring Alternatives to a New Jail," 89% of the population in the Fulton County Jail is Black, while Black people make up 43% of the population of Fulton County. As Sheriff, what will you do within your powers to reduce the racial disparities in incarceration? (150 words)

Let me begin by stating that as Sheriff, I have the authority to protect the inmates housed in the jail. I will use the influence of my office to work with community groups and stakeholders to deter and prevent criminal activity from members of our communities who are at high risk for engaging in criminal activity and breaking cycles of recidivism.

I will also educate the community, especially the young population, in crime prevention. Collaborate with organizations in the community to train life skills. That said, given the reported deaths and health concerns of inmates, noting that the majority of deaths have been to Black inmates, I will conduct extensive background screening on officers before they're hired and conduct diversity training, as well as train and teach the community how to communicate with the police officers to defuse tempers and to develop trust. Once trust and transparency are developed, we can minimize the bias among officers and the community.

Section [287\(g\) of the Immigration and Naturalization Act](#) allows the Department of Homeland Security to enter into formal written agreements with state or local law enforcement agencies and deputize selected state and local law enforcement officers to perform certain functions of federal immigration agents. Cooperation with ICE does not make our community safer, it harms our community.

Will you commit to not reinstating 287(g) in Fulton County?

Yes

No

Other

Civil asset forfeiture is used by law enforcement to confiscate property they deem as having been used in criminal activity and does not require a conviction or criminal charges. What should due process look like for people who seek to regain their property that has been seized by the department?

The Fifth Amendment of the Constitution, along with many state constitutions, safeguards property interests and due process, both of which are undermined by the practice of civil asset forfeiture.

Of course, the sheriff does not create laws but enforces them. To address concerns about civil asset forfeiture, community engagement in the legislative process is vital. Typically, property will not be returned until a case has been dismissed or settled.

A 2008 investigative report exposed that some sheriff's departments depend on forfeited funds for up to one-third of their budgets. This information underscores the need for transparency and reform in civil asset forfeiture practices. I can say that as Sheriff, I will not subscribe to such practices and will rely on my expertise to effectively manage my budget.

What protections should community members have from civil asset forfeiture?

Citizens must actively contact their representatives to advocate for changes in these laws. Law enforcement is bound to adhere strictly to the legal framework. Voters must elect officials who understand their needs and work according to their concerns regarding civil asset forfeiture.



An essential duty of the Fulton County Sheriff department is to provide security at the courthouse and in courtrooms.

What plans do you have to improve court security/efficiency?

Having been a Deputy sergeant at the Fulton County Sheriff's office during the Brian Nichols shooting, I have a crystal-clear understanding of the responsibilities of securing and protecting our courts.

First and foremost, selective hiring and extensive training are critical to effective service in all areas covered by the Sheriff's Office. And by selective hiring, I mean not hiring seat fillers, but hiring candidates who understand that this is public service and want to be effective public servants. This is critical to effectively ensuring the security of our courts.

Furthermore, guaranteeing thorough security measures within the courtroom involves implementing a rigorous screening process for everyone entering. The safety of our courts demands that we equip our deputies with proven technology to protect themselves as well as the visitors to our courts. Utilizing advanced technology and equipment, officers, employees, and contractors will undergo comprehensive screening.

To ensure heightened security, a minimum of two to three officers will be assigned to the courtroom. Specifically, one officer will be stationed at each entrance, with an additional officer assigned to provide security for the judge. This approach aims to enhance safety and maintain a secure environment within the courtroom setting.

Are you willing to participate in a ACLU of Georgia Town Hall Meeting with other Fulton County Sheriff candidates on April 16, 2024?

Yes

No

Other: .....