

# Candidates

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larly term limits, and plans to term limit himself.

Nelson, an attorney, said he sees what happens in Nashville affect his small business. He said he wants to bring a small-business approach to the state government and make sure the government is forward thinking on infrastructure, making sure the roads are supporting a safe and good standard of living.

Campfield, a former senator for District 7, said he is concerned with the opioid crisis, saying it is a long-term problem that needs rehabilitation rather than jail time. He is against tax increases and says Tennessee should not be a magnet for undocumented immigrants.

Hutchison, a former policeman and five-term sheriff, is a Karns resident who is concerned with school safety, saying in 2000 (as sheriff) he placed a police officer rather than a resource officer in schools. Resource officers must also teach a class; a police officer is dedicated to the school as a patrol zone.

Lafferty, a Realtor dealing with rental properties, said he can't find a young tradesman. He said he would like to increase trade programs through the "Ride and Decide" program and expanding programs in schools. He said he believes in keeping government small and taxes low.

Kane prepared several questions. One was, "How would you improve our educational system?"

The majority of candidates said they'd vote to reduce the amount of testing and do away with teaching to test. Campfield said to use the ACT and do away with weeks of testing. Hutchison said do away with "No child left behind" and stop passing failing kids along in the system.

Martinez was the only candidate to talk about budgeting.

"We need to fully fund our education system. The schools are underfunded \$500 million and our teachers are begging for raises. Most of them work a second job to make ends meet. Our technology is outdated. We must increase funding for schools."

Kane asked the candidates: "Are you in favor of criminal justice reform and what does that look like to you?"

Most candidates said to give alternative sentencing such as trash pickup and community service to low-level offenders. Martinez said there was no need to send someone to jail for simple possession of marijuana. She said many people in jail are actually addicts in need of treatment versus jail.

Hutchison disagreed, saying many people in the system who are addicted don't want help.

Nelson said recidivism was the problem and we need to offer training and



Victoria Raschke gives a hug to her favorite candidate, Keifel Agostini.



Guy Smoak gets a greeting at the door from Roger Kane.

job assistance to those getting out of jail.

Kane asked another question having to do with medical marijuana. "Would you legalize medical marijuana if it came to a vote on the floor of the House?"

The candidates, except for Hutchison, said that they would vote 'yes' for medical marijuana if it were appropriately regulated for use in serious illnesses like seizures, cancer and Parkinson's disease.

Hutchison said that during his time in law enforcement he dealt with people on marijuana and it was not a good experience, but he would reluctantly yield to the medical community.

"I have to be convinced, but if the medical field said it was a great idea then I'd look at it, but as of now I'd have to vote 'no.'"

Lafferty got emotional citing a friend's experience with his mother-in-law suffering from end stage cancer. Lafferty's friend risked his livelihood to acquire marijuana for his mother-in-law to help her during her last days.

"My friend went out on a limb purchasing a large amount of marijuana, enough to cost him his job. They converted it to oil; and while it did not save her life, it did add to her life, helped to ease her pain and increased her appetite. I asked him why he would do such a thing and he said 'because you don't know what it's like to watch someone die right before your very eyes.'"

"How is it in this country we don't let adults make decisions about their life especially so close to the very end is beyond me."

Election day is Aug. 2 with early voting beginning July 13.



School board Member Terry Hill and Stacey Campfield mug for the camera.

PHOTOS BY NANCY ANDERSON/SHOPPER NEWS



Jesse Nelson and Justin Lafferty take a moment for a quick "hello."



Coleen Martinez fields questions by fellow Democrat Heather Hensley.