

County Candidates Questionnaire – 2018

Washington County (Brenham), Texas

The Washington County Chamber of Commerce is asking the questions below of candidates for election. Please return your responses to the following questions by January 31, 2018 to news@brenhamtexas.com. (Email us to request this blank form so that you can complete it on screen.) All candidate responses will be publicized to the members of the Washington County Chamber and on www.BrenhamTexas.com. (Any candidate that chooses not to respond will have that indicated next to his/her name on the website.) Your response document will be viewed by local citizens and media outlets. It will be published as you provide it. Please double-check that it is free of typos and include the question above each response. *Thank you for sharing your views with Washington County citizens!*

Your Name _____ **John L. Durrenberger** _____

Position you're seeking **Republican Candidate for Washington County Judge** __

1. Why have you decided to run for election at this time?

Having just retired from a fast-paced business career for over 50 years, I can now turn my attention to helping Washington County as we prepare for the future. Our county faces unavoidable growth and new challenges daily that could be troubling if not managed with skill and imagination. This was not an easy decision.

Throughout the past year my phone rang constantly encouraging me to consider this position. I am grateful for the outreach and words of encouragement from throughout the county. My wife and I prayed over this decision and after much deliberation, I decided to pursue this opportunity.

2. What key competencies do you feel you possess to be an elected official? Briefly describe your background in financial management, leadership, communications, understanding of labor/HR issues, understanding of local economic issues, ability to contribute to strategic planning and initiatives, etc.

As we prepare for the future, Washington County needs fresh new ideas. My proven creativity in business, finance, leadership and management will put us on the right path to face the future. Having purchased, created and developed businesses for over 20 years prior to my joining Mike Hopkins Distributing, I learned to understand what it takes to meet payroll, work as a team and listen to the concerns of employees, customers and the general public. I retired from a 30-year role with Mike Hopkins Distributing Company where I recently served as Vice-President & General Sales Manager managing a multi-million dollar sales operation and a team of employees. This business experience has prepared me to work with various department leaders and elected officials to work as a team to find solutions to problems. Most importantly, I am a good listener. I know that I cannot fulfill the needs and priorities of citizens unless I listen to them.

Essentially, I have proven business experience, years of management skills that will allow me to work closely with staff, department leaders, elected officials and community leaders from throughout Washington County, a strong communication

foundation which allows me to be transparent, fair and open and most of all, common sense. We must restore common sense in our approach to governing.

Over the past sixty days, I have met with numerous department leaders, spent time with elected officials, researched the county budget, and met with individuals that have concerns about the operation of our county government in preparation for the office of County Judge. A competency of mine has always been to understand both sides of an issue, identify a solution and discuss next steps with those impacted, which is what I plan to do in the roles as our next county judge.

3. If you are elected, what do you consider to be the top priorities to work on?

- Crafting a fiscally conservative & business minded budget without tax increases.
- Communication/collaboration/transparency - work cooperatively with all county departments, other government entities and officials, non-profits, schools, civic organizations; listen to the citizens' concerns.
- Work with all first responders, public safety and emergency personnel to prepare for growth and preserve our tranquil quality of life.
- Develop a meaningful county-wide strategic plan; focus on improving residents' peace, prosperity and security. Ensure that all county departments are part of developing and implementing the strategy to improve results of county efforts.

4. What do you consider to be the top issue affecting our local economic growth?

As County Judge I envision a strong collaborative approach towards addressing economic growth between my office and the Washington County Chamber of Commerce, Burton Chamber of Commerce and Chappell Hill Chamber of Commerce. We must work collaboratively to ensure we are promoting the county and aware of issues that could negatively impact us as well. I would ensure an open dialogue, joint strategic planning and a business sense approach.

5. What could you do as an elected official to help small businesses in the community?

LISTEN to their needs. Small businesses are in the trenches every day and they know what needs to be done to be successful. Additionally, we have many small businesses throughout the rural area of Washington County, we must listen to their needs, advice and ensure they are engaged in planning for the county's future needs.

6. What is your opinion of offering economic development incentives to lure capital investment and jobs to the community?

Washington County must work with our economic development leaders in identifying and attracting new businesses that are well suited for our area. We must ensure we balance the needs of new businesses while ensuring we help promote and boost our current businesses. As Washington County grows, the commissioner's court must look long-term in regards to services and resources needed by new businesses and plan strategically to ensure we maintain economic prosperity for everyone. Incentives for new businesses must be carefully crafted and in collaboration with all governmental entities as we bring in sales tax revenue, jobs, retail and economic development. The County Commissioner Court must work closely with the Economic Development Foundation, our municipalities, Blinn College, Brenham & Burton ISD, and our Brazos Valley Council of Government as well as our state and federal elected officials to ensure we are business friendly, financially conservative and thoughtful as we consider any economic development incentives. As County Judge, my role would be pro-business, ensuring common sense is being applied, mindful of the future needs of the county and maintaining a strong tax base.

7. How important do you feel the relationship is between Washington County government officials and City of Brenham officials, City of Burton officials and the unincorporated communities? How could these relationships be improved?

We must restore open and positive communication between county leaders, both Burton & Brenham city officials, and all parties involved on matters vital to Washington County. I feel it is essential to visit with all leaders on key issues and maintain an open dialogue regularly, not just as needed and be preemptive, not reactionary to issues potentially impacting our area.

8. Do you support the Washington County Chamber's "Government Advocacy Policy Statements"? (The 2017 version is attached.) This will be a key document for our community's advocacy activities at the state level. Does it include any policy statements you do not agree with? Is there anything you would suggest adding to bring to the attention of state leaders during the upcoming legislative session?

Yes, I support the Policy Statements and as our next County Judge, I welcome the opportunity to help craft these priorities and provide guidance and input from statewide county associations in order to foster collaboration for our business, city, community and county's legislative needs.

**Return by January 31, 2018 to:
news@brenhamtexas.com**

WASHINGTON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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