

## Marion County candidates are ready for primary

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### State races:

Senate District 30: Kent Williams, incumbent, is opposed by former Magistrate Levone Graves. District 30 covers most of Marion, from Mullins west, a portion of Florence County, much of Dillon County and up to Bennettsville in Marlboro County. Rep. Jim Battle, House District 57, is unopposed.

Levone Graves said in May at a candidate forum and debate in Dillon that he is the better choice to represent the senatorial district because he has the right experience. He has a degree in political science and served as a magistrate in Marion County's for 16 years, where he interpreted laws. Graves said he isn't sure what his opponent has accomplished in his first term in office and that the people in District 30 deserve a "positive change." "I am qualified to help write laws," he said, adding that writing laws is the job of a senator. "I have the knowledge and capability to be a good candidate." While Graves was president of the state's magistrate group, he was instrumental in getting a bill passed that revolutionized the way magistrates are paid. From that experience, he said, he knows how to negotiate and understands how the legislature works and what it takes to pass laws.

Graves said education is the biggest issue Marion County faces and that he'd work to reduce drop out rates in the schools, to give achievement incentives in teachers and teachers' aides pay and would seek to cut the administrative expense of education in Marion County by having one superintendent for the county's education system rather than three.

Graves is a member of St. Paul Baptist Church and has two grown daughters and six grandchildren. His wife, Jacqueline, spoke on his behalf during the Marion County Democratic Stump meeting. The two have been getting the word out about his candidacy. He said he considers himself a "people person" and that serving on the bench helped to teach him how to serve others.

Sen. Kent Williams, completing his first term of office, is the Marion County Assistant Administrator. Williams said a senator's job is to "To serve the people, plain and simple." Williams has served the region in many ways, by being appointed to boards and commissions and was Chairman of the Marion County School Board at one point in time. One of his senate committee assignments has been to sit on the Senate Education Oversight Committee. "We are making progress toward ensuring that our children get the right start — such as the expansion of four-year old kindergarten — but sweeping education reforms will be necessary to find a way to go beyond providing "minimally adequate" education to developing a culture of excellence," he said.

Williams said when the opportunity to run for Senate presented itself it, just seemed like the right thing to do. “I truly enjoy the opportunity to serve my fellow South Carolinians ...” He said that since the state leads the nation with some of its county’s high unemployment rates, that bringing new, higher-paying jobs to the state and economic development is one of his top priorities. “I believe that the best leaders are those who stay in touch with those they serve. Some of the best solutions I have ever heard on how to meet the challenges we face have come from constituents. Holding elective office is an honor and a privilege, and those who remember that will be successful, effective leader,” he said.

Graves and Williams were each born and raised in Marion County. Graves moved to Philadelphia to work after graduation and served a tour in the U.S. Air Force. He has worked with the United Parcel Service before returning to Marion County. He has a master’s degree in education from the University of South Carolina. Williams has an associate’s degree from Florence-Darlington Technical College and a bachelor’s of science degree in from South Carolina State University.

#### Candidates for Marion County Council

District 1: John Q. Atkinson Jr., the unopposed incumbent, is chairman of the Marion County Council. Atkinson has served on county council for 18 years, is a board member of the Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments and is a former board member of the S.C. Association of Counties.

“I feel that the most exciting plans for Marion County are in our reach,” Atkinson said. “Marion County Council has a vision, which may soon be reality.” Atkinson says that soon a project will come to fruition that he believes will provide jobs, capital investment and a quality of life that will be drastically different from that of today’s standards. Atkinson says he believes that one of the most important gains for Marion County during his time on the council is the trust that has developed between the cities in Marion County, with the county as a whole.

District 2: Eloise Rogers, incumbent, is opposed by two, Cynthia Legette and Diane Davis Lewis.

Cynthia Legette, making a bid for County Council District 2 is an incumbent District 2 Marion County School Board member. If elected, Legette says she pledges to address the issues of jobs and businesses within the county.

“I know that jobs are an important issue, but we have got to work together to make sure that we have water and sewer (utilities) in place so that whenever a business does come in, they will have all they need to supply jobs,” she says. She says she also plans to address the issues of families, youth and recreation within the county.

We have some parks and recreational centers that need improvements, where our young children can go, in a safe environment, she says. “We need to make sure that we have jobs for our single parent mothers and fathers so that they can make a decent living ... not working 12 and 13 hour shifts.”

Legette says she also plans to work to conserve land in Marion County, as opposed to creating more landfills.

“As (District 2) representative, I would monitor the budget and be certain that each penny is spent wisely.”

Diane Davis Lewis, a lifetime resident of Marion and educator for 30 years, is a candidate for Marion County Council District 2. She says that if she is elected, she will provide a new direction in the administration of Marion County District 2.

“It is time for a change, and it is time for progress in our county,” Lewis says, adding, “We need to look at things the way they are, and not the way that they have been.”

Lewis says that as a retired career educator, she will have the time to devote to District 2 that will allow for better service. “I am a hard worker, dedicated to serving every single citizen of Marion County,” she says.

She says that some of her main goals as a District 2 representative would be to create a better environment for incoming industries, such offering quality education, improved roads and fair and affordable housing.

Eloise Rogers, incumbent, is completing her first term on the county council and is seeking re-election.

“I am running because I love Marion County and the people who live here. I want to see Marion County grow,” she says.

Rogers says if she is re-elected, Marion County will see a sharp turn around from the jobless days of the present.

“We have been working (on a project to bring in more jobs) ... I am not allowed to say too much about it, but when it does come to Marion County, it will make a difference ...” she says. “You will see Marion County turn around...” Rogers says that this project will bring benefits that will affect all citizens of Marion County.

She also says that she has served District 2 well during her four years on the board.

“I have not gone home and sat in a recliner and watched television,” she says. “I have been answering people’s (telephone) calls and getting things done for people.”

District 4: Allen W. Floyd, incumbent, is facing opposition from Cynthia Furnace Lawes.

Allen W. Floyd of Mullins, is seeking re-election for a fourth term on County Council.

“I look forward to serving the citizens of District 4 over the next four years,” he says, adding that if he is re-elected, he looks to make Marion County a better place to live by improving the quality of life through the addition of jobs.

“We recently added the AAC plant and are looking at adding two other businesses, as well as an inland port that we have been looking to locate in Mullins for the past two years,” he says. “I believe Marion County is on the edge of greatly improving.”

Keeping taxes down to a reasonable amount and carefully managing the budget of Marion County will be some of Floyd’s main objectives, he says, should he be re-elected.

“I am tough on a dollar and I will try to keep taxes down. I feel that we are close to emerging from the slump that we are in,” he says.

Cynthia Furnace Lawes of Mullins is seeking election as the Marion County Council District 4 representative.

“I feel that I am qualified for the job because I have proved that I can manage by running my own business, Dirrty Records,” Lawes says. “I have also organized programs for our youth, such as the Young, Gifted, and Rich program that teaches young people how to run their own business.” She says that many people have thanked her for the programs that she has brought to the community.

Lawes says she is the voice for the young of Marion County and can provide progress that has not been available for citizens. “The youth in the county need to have more programs and services available to them, and I feel that I can provide the leadership to give them that, as a representative of District 4,” she says.

“We need more, and I feel that I can provide that sort of leadership if elected to County Council.”

District 6: Pearly Britt, the incumbent, is being opposed by Hollis Martin, who has served Council in this District before.

Pearly Britt, incumbent, is seeking re-election to his second term. Britt is a retired Marion County game warden and veteran of the Korean War. Britt says that some of the highlights of his first term as a member of the Marion County Council were locating Logisticare in Mullins and creating 52 jobs with that firm, as well as Trailer Makers, with the addition of 16 jobs.

He says he also worked with the City of Mullins in the relocation of Arvin-Meritor to the Anvil building in Mullins, saving more than 200 jobs. Additionally, “The county has a comprehensive zoning ordinance and is working to ensure orderly growth in the county,” he says. Britt also says the county has worked with the Interstate-73 committee and as a member of the Northeast Strategic Alliance to work toward development of the I-73 corridor through Marion County. “The right-of-way easements are beginning to be purchased by the South Carolina Department of Transportation as the final step before construction,” he says.

Britt says he is proud of his record since being elected to County Council. He adds that he has done his best to please people.

Hollis Martin, a former County Council member is seeking to return to County Council District 6. He says he is looking to take Marion County in a new direction.

“One of the biggest concerns that I have is that Marion County is going through a very tough time economically and we are operating with a budget in the red,” he explains, adding “One of the first things that we need to do is to work to get back to a balanced budget.” Martin says he would also like to preserve the “hometown” image that Marion County has had for many years.

“When people come here, one of the things that they like about Marion County is that image of a hometown and I feel as though we are losing that,” he says. Martin adds that one of the ways to maintain that “hometown” atmosphere is by re-examining the zoning laws of the county, to help in the overall solution of conserving Marion County’s image.

“People need jobs and we need to work hard with our industrial parks to ensure that we have the infrastructure that we need to secure industries that can sustain the county,” he says.

#### Candidates for Marion County sheriff

Mark Richardson, incumbent, is facing opposition to his position from former Sheriff’s Deputy Dewayne Tennie.

Mark Richardson, incumbent, is seeking re-election to the office of Marion County Sheriff. Richardson says he feels during his first term that he has served Marion County well and the experience gained in his first term will provide what is needed to serve the county even better.

“I have done my job as Sheriff for all citizens of Marion County,” he says. “I have improved response time, worked very hard on our county’s drug problem, worked on the stolen property problems, and we have made great progress ... But there is still work to be done.” Richardson says that the problem of drugs within the county is a problem that must be dealt with, with the greatest sense of urgency.

“The drug dealers and the gangs, (if not dealt with) will take over our neighborhoods and communities,” he says, adding, “You can’t talk about fighting gangs unless you’re talking about fighting drugs.” Richardson says one of the reasons the Marion County Sheriff’s Office has had such success in solving crimes, such as homicides, is because of the department’s working relationship with other departments in the area.

He says if he is re-elected, he would continue to fight the troubles the county is facing today. “If we continue to work together, we can make a difference and we can make Marion County a safer place to live.”

Dewayne Tennie, is former Marion County Sheriff’s Deputy, is the opposing candidate for the Marion County Sheriff’s position.

Tennie says that in addition to having the qualifications to serve as Marion County Sheriff, he also has the confidence and commitment.

“If elected Sheriff, I plan to make a positive impact on this county ... I will work to reach out to our youth, school, parents and organizations, to save not only the youth, but the county.” Tennie says he will also place on emphasis on education among the deputies of Marion County, as well as implementing recruitment programs that would aim to increase the number of deputies working in the county.

“I will establish community sub-stations that will make law enforcement more assessable and visible to our citizens, as well as decrease response time,” he says.

Tennie says he will also organize crime watch programs within individual communities to address the problems of gang violence, property crime and drug trafficking, all of which have had a negative effect on Marion County recently.

“My commitment is to make Marion County a safe place to live, work and raise a family ... I am ready, willing and up to the challenge to make Marion County the best that it can be,” he says.

Other county-wide elected positions that will appear on Tuesday's ballot, but which are unopposed, and the person filling the position, are Clerk of Court, Sherry Rhodes; County Coroner, Jerry Richardson; Probate Judge, T. Carroll Atkinson.