

# 2022 Sonoma County Sheriff Candidates Primary Election Nonpartisan Voter Guide

Candidates were asked to limit their answers to 150 words per question. Candidate answers are printed in full - there has been no editing or paraphrasing of their answers. This guide is to educate voters impartially on a nonpartisan basis. The ACLU of Northern California and its Sonoma County Chapter do not support nor oppose any candidate for the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office.

**Question #1: Please discuss any specific measures (e.g., policies, audits, investigations, etc.) you will undertake in your first year as Sheriff to address any potential White Supremacist or Hate Group affiliations or behaviors in the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office.**

**Dave Edmonds:** *This concern and question is coming up so frequently that I will first work confirm that the current Sheriff's Department policy manual specifically disallows membership or any form of affiliation or, outside of authorized official contact in accordance with appropriate job functions, any contact with such groups or its members. If the policy manual does not, or if it does so insufficiently, I will draft such policy and vet it with IOLERO for implementation. This will include an affirmative obligation to report any such contacts, even if incidental, immediately.*

*Furthermore, I will work with the IOLERO Director (who, as a county department head, will be my equal), to come up with the most thorough legal means to scour all staff members' private affairs for any such affiliations or contacts. These people represent our Sheriff's Office, and I will demand the highest standards of integrity from them.*

**Eddie Engram:** *Participation by Sheriff's Office staff in hate groups of any kind, including White Supremacists, is unacceptable and violation of Office policy. As one of the few Black people in the Office, I know racism when I see it and I do not see evidence of White Supremacy. That being said, I have a zero-tolerance approach to racism and hate groups. Any member of the Office would be subject to an internal affairs investigation if they exhibit racist behavior, including participation with hate groups. I support anti-retaliation for whistleblowers who file a complaint against a coworker. As the ultimate disciplinary authority, I am not afraid to terminate an employee when warranted.*

**Carl Tennenbaum:** *Law enforcement officers take an oath to uphold the laws of the land and defend the Constitution, regardless of a person's race, ethnicity, gender, or other protected status. Upon taking office as the Sheriff, I will conduct an audit of all employees to ensure that there is not any hate group participation within the Sheriff's Office. I will also encourage community members to report any incidents of bias exhibited by Sheriff's Office employees. There will be no tolerance for officers who affiliate with hate groups, through membership, participation, social media posts, or displays of hate speech, signs, flags, or tattoos. Inclusivity through compassion, dignity, and respect to all will be my Sheriff's Office philosophy, with strict policy prohibiting membership or participation in any hate group. Firm discipline, including termination, will be the consequence if it is determined that an employee has participated in any hate group activity.*

**Question #2:** The following Detention Division goals are taken from the Sheriff's website. What specific actions will you undertake to ensure the success of these goals:

- a) To offer inmates an opportunity for rehabilitation through participation in religious, educational, recreational, vocational, and work programs;
- b) To release inmates back into the community in better condition medically & psychologically than when they came into custody;
- c) To foster a custodial environment that supports positive inmate behavior and provides discipline for misconduct.

**Dave Edmonds:** *These three goals are first conditioned upon staff performance. And right now, they are beyond reach because of the systemic dysfunction throughout the Detention Division's leadership that has caused many staff to give up, to lose hope, and to only come to work to get paid.*

*So that these goals can be reached, I will first install a wise, savvy, and experienced Detention Assistant Sheriff. She will whip the entire chain-of-command into shape so that staff can trust and respect its leadership, and thereby help achieve these goals.*

*Built 30 years ago for direct supervision, the Main Adult Detention Facility (MADF) design countermands these goals. Furthermore, with the closing of the North County Detention Facility (NCDF), MADF is too crowded for any appreciable efforts. NCDF will never again pass inspection standards. To fulfill these presently unreachable goals, the Board of Supervisors will need to fund the institutional means.*

**Eddie Engram:** *I am the only candidate who has worked in or managed a detention facility. Currently I am the Assistant Sheriff of the Detention Division. I will do the following to improve detention services:*

- *Expand the educational and treatment services provided to inmates with the goal of reducing recidivism.*
- *Strengthen the discharge planner program to further reduce recidivism and ease the transition out of custody.*
- *Expand the existing Medical Assisted Treatment program, which provides people addicted to opiates with safe, alternative treatment to street drugs. I was instrumental in establishing this program and am proud of the positive impact we're making.*
- *Work with the Board of Supervisors to secure funding to make jail phone calls free. This benefit for inmates and, just as importantly, their families, is a crucial tool in keeping inmates connected and motivated to make good choices while in custody.*

**Carl Tennenbaum:** *I will conduct a full audit of the jail, implementing programs needed to ensure safe and secure conditions within the jail. I will increase hiring in order to maintain full deputy and civilian staffing. I will eliminate the usurious commissary and phone card fees, using those funds as intended: to directly benefit the detainees with religious, educational, recreational, vocational, and work programs.*

*I will ensure that the jail healthcare provider is fully staffed and fulfilling the obligations of their contract, which will result in better mental and physical health treatment.*

*I will increase wrap around services for detainees that include homeless, drug, alcohol, and mental health counseling services, with follow up resources provided to the detainees that assist them in transitioning successfully back into society upon release.*

*All of these steps will improve morale in the entire jail population, thus reducing hostile interactions between the Sheriff's staff and the detainees.*

**Question #3: Discuss your views of Measure P, and whether and how you would work to restore the powers currently deemed unenforceable.**

**Dave Edmonds:** *I have two bright lines: I follow the law and I follow policy. Any law enforcement leader who doesn't is rogue and untrustworthy.*

*But, even as Measure P gets adjudicated, it can still be implemented. Labor's meet and confer safeguard is not "meet and agree". It's simply meeting in good faith and conferring...so, I would. If the unions are not persuasive (and I don't know what they could say persuasively), I would implement Measure P fully.*

*But even with Measure P fully implemented, any rogue deputies will be more concerned about my oversight than IOLERO's. My performance expectations are well known, and it's why the two deputies' unions don't want me elected. These unions and the Office of the Sheriff are in a codependent relationship. To stay in power, both are accepting each other's underperformance. This is not only dysfunctional, it adds to the argument for their continued oversight.*

**Eddie Engram:** *I support effective oversight of the Sheriff's Office.*

*With the passage of Measure P, it's clear the majority of people in Sonoma County want oversight. The Sheriff's job is to follow and enforce the law. I will implement portions of Measure P that are deemed legal.*

*While we wait for Measure P to make its way through the courts, I will immediately and regularly work collaboratively with the Independent Office of Law Enforcement Review and Outreach and the Citizens Advisory Committee to ensure appropriate reforms are implemented and transparency is enhanced.*

*The people of Sonoma County deserve strengthened Office integrity and community trust. Those two goals can be met with a Sheriff who complies with the law and embraces constructive oversight.*

*Legally, no candidate could restore the powers currently deemed unenforceable. The issue is in court and the Sheriff has no extra judicial authority to implement items ruled unenforceable.*

**Carl Tennenbaum:** *There should be no secrets within the Sheriff's Office. I entered this race because of my active participation on the Measure P committee, and the problems that I saw with the lack of transparency and oversight, which I firmly believe in and that should make for a more community-oriented organization. Every job has oversight, and a publicly funded Sheriff's Office with a Sheriff elected by the people is no exception.*

*The Deputy Sheriff's Association, and Sheriff Essick's opposition to Measure P, is costing their union and Sonoma County hundreds of thousands of dollars due to their obstructive tactics. As Sheriff, I will fulfill the requirements of Measure P by making it department policy. I will meet and confer with the union, as required by law, while working with our legal counsel to ensure that Measure P, as passed by the voters, is implemented as soon as possible.*

**Question #4: As Sheriff, what, if any, changes would you make (policies, procedures, training, etc.) to how the Sheriff's Office interacts with youth in Sonoma County? Please provide timelines for any proposed changes.**

**Dave Edmonds:** *First, I will set a new tone department wide. Staff will know I expect them to be friendly and kind, particularly to youth. But also, one of my platform commitments is to make our staffing mirror our community's diversity: one-third is Latino, and of course, half are female. Our diverse youth are the ideal pipeline for hiring, but to accomplish this, we need to be recruiting in the right locations. Of course, that's in our schools.*

*I will hold my Assistant Sheriffs accountable for running the organization according to my standards, so that, leading from the front, I can be our primary goodwill ambassador. To help with my recruitment goals, and to help students gain trust in law enforcement, this will include my personal, regular student interactions at predominantly Latino schools, countywide.*

**Eddie Engram:** *Throughout my career, I have been a proponent of our Explorer program and youth outreach. The Explorer program is an excellent way to engage with the youth in our community. I will work to promote and rebuild the program which was decimated by the Pandemic due to the inability to meet.*

*I will work to implement a Sheriff's Activities League for youth members of our community. This is a time intensive program which would need initial infrastructure including a funding sources and volunteers. I will work with the California Police Activities League, which assists organizations with establishing and developing chapters in California. My goal is to have a program established by the end of my first term.*

*I support Summer Youth Academy programs similar to our existing Community Academies.*

*I will support and engage in outreach to local youth groups within the first year of my term as Sheriff.*

**Carl Tennenbaum:** *I will immediately create new and innovative policies that reflect the entire Sonoma County community, including our youth. Current policies are boilerplate that are peddled to law enforcement agencies nationwide by LEXIOPOL. My new policies will be created with guidance of Sonoma County Counsel, with input and participation of all community groups and organizations. Included within these policies will be clear guidelines for dealing with the youth of our county, including non-confrontational situations. These policies will take one year to develop and implement.*

*In addition to implicit bias training for all personnel, I will implement sensitivity training that is co-taught by representatives from various youth advocacy organizations, including the Sonoma County Juvenile Justice Commission. To be done immediately.*

*I will increase youth outreach, growing the current cadet program by actively recruiting in our more diverse communities, with deputies participating in community events like street fairs, markets, and youth sports programs.*

**Question #5:** Men incarcerated in Sonoma County can be housed in either the Main Adult Detention Facility, a medium/maximum security facility, or, if eligible, in the North County Detention Facility, a minimum security facility. Women, regardless of charge, are only eligible to be housed in the Main Adult Detention Facility, the medium/maximum security facility. Please discuss this situation and what, if anything, you would do in your first two years as Sheriff to change it.

**Dave Edmonds:** *NCDF is closed, so all inmates are housed at the MADF. Prior to the NCDF closure, female inmates were housed at the MADF, but only because there weren't enough female deputies for the NCDF 301 female unit to be open. Once 301 closed, in order to meet female minimum staffing requirements, female deputies worked in the MADF. This allowed two female deputies to work E module. But when female staffing decreased again, it became necessary to have one female deputy and one male deputy assigned to E module. As you can imagine, this created several issues.*

*My first objective will be to make the organization's culture more attractive to potential female employees, and then, do a much better job at recruitment. Next, I'll earn the Board of Supervisors' trust and support for funding adequate inmate housing that reflects our commitment to rehabilitation. The Sheriff can't ignore this problem any longer.*

**Eddie Engram:** *In 2010 female inmates were moved from the North County Facility (NCDF) to the Main Adult Detention Facility (MADF) as a cost cutting measure, and to ensure female inmates were only guarded by female deputies.*

*As of now, NCDF is closed due to reduced population in the jail. Additionally, due to the changes in law (Proposition 47 and Proposition 57), as well as the Pre-Trial release program administered by the Probation Department, there are a relatively lower amount of all inmates who would be considered minimum security. Currently only 15% or 8 female inmates are eligible for housing at NCDF 52 female inmates. Only 20% male inmates are eligible for NCDF housing. This consistent with Pre-Pandemic averages. It would not be cost effective or operationally effective (transferring female staff from MADF) to house female inmates at NCDF. If staffing levels or these statistics change, I will reevaluate the policy.*

**Carl Tennenbaum:** *Disparate treatment based on gender, especially when it is harsher than necessary, is never okay. This discriminatory carceral practice is no exception, and I would absolutely work to make sure that there are appropriate facilities for women as there are for men. The Sheriff's Office currently operates with a \$210 million budget. I would take immediate steps to fund building and staffing a separate women's section at the North County Detention Facility.*

*My overall goal is to reduce the jail population as much as possible while ensuring public safety. Again, I will work on a new policy that addresses issuing citations as opposed to incarceration. Every person taken into custody becomes a liability for the Sheriff's Office and Sonoma County. We are already incarcerating too many people and there are doubtless many people in custody who do not need to be detained.*