

Learn more about candidates in the contested Ellis County primary election races on August 4th.



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2020 Primary Election Attorney Candidate Profiles

Tell the community about yourself and your background.

Robert A Anderson Jr. Republican

I grew up in Ellinwood, Kansas and graduated from Ellinwood High School where I was a four-sport athlete, member of the National Honor Society, and an Eagle Scout. I continued my education at Barton County Community College and afterward received B.S. from Kansas State University. I received my Juris Doctor law degree from Washburn University School of Law in August 2014. Upon passing the bar exam, I joined my father's law practice in Ellinwood, Kansas.

In March 2017, I married my best friend and high school sweetheart, Abby. We moved to Hays in June of 2017 where I opened up my own law practice. I'm an active member of the Hays community and enjoy golfing and traveling with family and friends.

Christopher Lyon Republican

I am a married father of four. I am a proud Army veteran. I enjoy prosecution and I enjoy working with law enforcement. My wife and I first moved to Hays in 2014 where I worked as an Assistant Ellis County Attorney for four years. I am the current Hays Municipal Prosecutor and Trego County Attorney. We recently moved to Kansas City to help with a family medical issue but will be returning to the area after the primary.

Why are you running for office?

Robert A Anderson Jr. Republican

Initially, I decided to run because of the support and encouragement I received from my opponent in this race, Chris Lyon. Back in January 2020, Chris asked to meet with me and explained that he and his wife had made the decision to move to the Kansas City area for family reasons; that he was withdrawing from the County Attorney race the next day; and that he wanted me to run for Ellis County Attorney.

Now I'm running because if I don't, Ellis County will have an absent, partially invested County Attorney.

Ellis County deserves someone who is here, accessible, and present. This is NOT a part-time job and this position needs someone who can devote their time and attention to the County Attorney's Office. I am the only candidate in this race who can and is promising to do just that.

Christopher Lyon Republican

Prosecution is a very important aspect of community safety and well-being. Ellis County would benefit from a prosecutor with lots of courtroom experience who is not timid about criminal jury trials. In addition, I can reduce the budget by implementing up-to-date policies and procedures. Criminal cases are not getting filed in Ellis County. This is an issue for anyone involved in the criminal justice system. It has implications that go well beyond the courtroom.

What pertinent experience do you have that would make you successful in the office you are seeking?

Robert A Anderson Jr. Republican

I have been handling all of the types of cases that are filed by the Ellis County Attorney's office for my entire career (felony/misdemeanor criminal cases; traffic matters; child in need of care; juvenile offender; and care & treatment). As an attorney who has spent five years in opposition to the Ellis County Attorney's Office, advocating for clients and counseling them through some of the toughest situations of their lives, I bring a very unique perspective to this position. My past experience as a defense attorney will aid me in case evaluation, strategy, and ensure that I seek justice, not just a conviction rate.

Christopher Lyon Republican

I am the current Hays Municipal Prosecutor and have been since 2016. I am the current Trego County Attorney and I special prosecute in counties in other Kansas counties. I have leadership experience from being a non-commissioned officer in the US Army. I know how the Ellis County Attorney's Office operates having worked there for four years. I have handled many different types of cases and have first or second chaired approximately a dozen criminal jury trials.

Please prioritize the top four issues/items you would like to address while in office.

Robert A Anderson Jr. Republican

On my website, www.robertandersonjr.com, I list these as my "initiatives". They are:

1. To increase office efficiency
2. Clear the backlog of cases
3. Focus on the safety of the community by prioritizing violent crimes and property crimes that directly affect the citizens of Ellis County
4. Generally work to reduce taxpayer costs associated with the Ellis County Attorney's Office, our jail, and our state prisons. Please visit my website for more information about my plans to execute each of these initiatives.

Christopher Lyon Republican

1. Backlog of cases
2. Budget
3. Update technology
4. Communication with law enforcement and the courts

What programs and policies would you implement as County Attorney to reduce crime and/or increase public safety in the county?

Robert A Anderson Jr. Republican

As County Attorney, I certainly would have the ability to be tough on crime. I could work toward policies that send people to prison and remove them from our society. This, of course, would have a deterrence effect and should, by its very nature, increase public safety as we remove criminals from society. On the other hand, I would have the discretion to enact policies that focus on intervention and rehabilitation which, if successful, would reduce recidivism and increase public safety.

Both approaches have valid pros and cons, but not all cases can be treated the same. Simply put, there are those who need to be removed from our society and put into prison (those who are dangerous, violent, or evil) and those who do not necessarily need to be removed from our society (not inherently dangerous, violent, or evil). Offenders who are not inherently dangerous, violent, or evil often times are misguided, addicted, or mentally ill. These are people who have great potential for rehabilitation and may not need to be incarcerated.

As a member of this community (a Hays resident), I share the desire to have a safe and clean community. As your next County Attorney, I will aggressively prosecute those individuals who are dangerous, violent, or evil and will seek to have them removed from this county and placed into prison. I will approach the community members who have lost their way or are suffering from mental illness or drug addiction with empathy and aim to implement policies that focus on intervention and rehabilitation.

Christopher Lyon Republican

I would file all the cases that need to be filed in an orderly and efficient manner. If crimes are not prosecuted, then there is a direct correlation on public safety.

Right now, technology is changing. Court is being live-streamed and attorneys are "appearing" in court from their office desks. It is a great time to change with the times. The Ellis County Attorney's Office still utilizes dictation which is time consuming and a waste of resources. Taxpayers need the benefit of the most modern technology that will save resources and hours worked. In turn, this leads to more efficient case management which can lead to more cases getting prosecuted. There are many more examples where improvements can be made by adopting technology.

Also, I would hire prosecutors that are ambitious, enjoy jury trials, and communicate well with law enforcement, victims and other attorneys.

What do you think is the most effective way to deal with low-level drug offenders?

Robert A Anderson Jr. Republican

For frame of reference, when we are talking about "low-level drug offenders", here is what we mean: individuals who possess illegal drugs that would constitute misdemeanor crimes and individuals who possess (NOT distribute) small amounts of illegal drugs that would constitute felonies who also have little-to-no criminal history (especially no person felonies on their record).

For these individuals, the aim should be intervention and rehabilitation. In many instances, I believe we can accomplish that goal with a diversion policy that requires individuals to seek out substance abuse treatment. For individuals who are not diversion eligible, probation coupled with court-ordered treatment, group living, and/or "Drug Court" is an excellent option.

In contrast, when we are talking about "high-level drug offenders", these being individuals with significant history or perhaps those who are distributing or transporting large quantities of illegal drugs, we can and should start to consider all of our options, including prison.

An important fact to note is that Kansas prisons operate at over 100% capacity and cost tax-payers quite a bit.

According to Kansaslegalresearch.org, in 2019 Kansas prisons operated at a capacity utilization rate of 100.4% (10,009 inmates); each prisoner costing Kansas taxpayers approximately \$26,000.00 per year for a total of over \$260 MILLION dollars. At times, even our local jail operates over capacity and we, the county and taxpayers, have to pay other counties to house the overflow.

With those statistics in mind, it is important that justification exists for each inmate housed in our county jail and state prisons to ensure that our taxpayer dollars are being properly utilized.

There is no "one size fits all" approach to dealing with drug offenders. My office policies will allow each prosecutor to evaluate on a case-by-case basis how to best serve the ends of justice and keep our community safe.

Christopher Lyon Republican

The State of Kansas has already adopted varying ways to deal with low-level drug offenders. There are drug treatment programs available for low-level drug offenders. There should always be a consequence for drug violations, but that consequence can vary as to the frequency of the criminal behavior and the type and amount of drugs being used. There is a huge difference between marijuana use and methamphetamine use. With that being said, Ellis County has a great Drug Court that should be utilized well into the future.

As County Attorney, how would you work with local police and mental health professionals to better serve our community?

Robert A Anderson Jr. Republican

Let me begin by saying that I believe our local law enforcement officers and mental health professionals do a great job. As a community member for over three years and a legal professional in the area for over five years, I am continually impressed with the work that our public service agencies do; you are all very much needed and appreciated.

As County Attorney, I will make myself available and listen to our local law enforcement officers' and mental health professionals' expertise on what I can do in and out of the courtroom to better serve our community. I want to work as closely as I can with them to develop policies and procedures that maximize community safety. Currently, I am in the process of trying to get written feedback from the Hays, Ellis, & Victoria Police Departments; the Ellis County Sheriff's Department; the Ellis County Jail; and various mental health professionals in Ellis County that will aid me in developing policies and procedures that will better serve the community.

As the only candidate for Ellis County Attorney that lives in Ellis County, I can promise that our law enforcement officers and mental health professionals will have the access to me that they need, the access that they deserve.

Christopher Lyon Republican

Communication will be key. Law enforcement work extremely hard to keep the citizens of Ellis County safe. Health Officials do as well. They are being asked to do more with less. I will support them as best I can and listen their needs. There is no "one size fits all" answer to this question as different people and organizations have different needs. If one can communicate, then those needs can be understood and possibly met.

Thank you to all the candidates for their time in providing responses. Don't forget to vote August 4th!