

Duffy: Most experience of any sheriff candidate

Publisher's note: Four people are running for the position of sheriff of Douglas County Sheriff's Office. Their profiles will run May 4 and May 5.



Joe Duffy

Name: Joe Duffy

Age: 48

Occupation: Patrol division captain, Douglas County Sheriff's Office

What groups, nonprofits, other civic involvement are you part of outside of work?: I am the first vice president of the FBI National Academy Associates/Nevada Chapter and I am a member of the International Footprint Association-Minden Chapter 72. I am not part of any other service clubs currently, however I have supported them during my career here at the sheriff's office by supporting and/or participating in events they host. I have been a coach in recreation basketball and Carson Valley Little League baseball. I am a member of St. Gall's Catholic Church.

What is your opinion about teachers having guns at school?:

The sheriff's office has no say or control over school policies and procedures. However, my personal opinion is that I do not think teachers should be carrying guns in schools. If the school district decided to employ that tactic, I would strongly recommend teachers go through the same annual and quarterly firearms training that a law enforcement officer does.

Vacation rentals are allowed at Lake Tahoe. Should they be allowed everywhere in Douglas County? Why or why not?:

This is not in my sphere of responsibility, however as your sheriff, I will make sure no matter what housing exists, the citizens of Douglas County will be protected.

How best to enforce vacation home rental regulations?:

If there is a complaint of a crime or excessive noise, residents should always call the sheriff's office to handle those situations. In regards to other non-criminal vacation home regulations, those would be a civil matter in which case a deputy could still respond to write a report or the matter would need to be handled between the owner and the renters.

Why do you want to be sheriff?:

I want to be sheriff because it is a passion of mine and I want to help people who cannot help themselves. As a young boy, I always knew that when I grew up I wanted to be a law enforcement officer. At age 20, I became a deputy with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and I have been in law enforcement for all of my adult life, working my way up through the ranks to my current position of captain. With Sheriff [Ron] Pierini retiring, I am taking the opportunity to use my extensive training and experience to advance to the next level in law enforcement. I will continue to bring the best law enforcement services to the citizens in Douglas County and I will ensure our community stays safe and gang and graffiti free. Lastly, I love where I live. I raised my son here, my brother, his family and my parents all live here, and I enjoy being part of this

community. I want to be sheriff because I care. I care about our quality of life and I care about the people who live and work here. I want to ensure we keep Douglas County one of the safest communities in the state.

Why should someone vote for you over someone else?: I have the most experience as a full-time law enforcement officer over any other candidate running for the office of sheriff. I have worked for the LA Sheriff's Department for five years and I have been at the Douglas County Sheriff's Office for over 23 years. I have worked every division at DCSO, including: patrol, jail, investigations, administration, plus a wide variety of collateral duties including: K9 handler, SWAT, internal affairs and gang investigations. I have been a captain for the last eight years and have managed three different divisions during that time: Those being, administration, the jail and I am the current patrol captain for the last 2½ years. I am also the captain of our 16-person SWAT team, our six-person K9 unit and our honor guard. I am a graduate of the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Va., and have taught thousands of officers and civilians in my career on the topic of gangs, including military and law enforcement officers overseas. I am the only candidate with my executive POST certificate. I have managed budgets, handled difficult personnel issues and have a true understanding of what the role of sheriff of Douglas County entails. Two of my opponents don't have POST certificates, so they would have to go to the POST academy. The other opponent, Capt. [Dan] Coverley has less experience at the command level. This is not a popularity contest, this is the highest law enforcement officer responsible for the safety and security of the county and should not be handed to someone who is inexperienced and would not be able to hit the ground running as your sheriff. We need positive, productive change in the sheriff's office, not the same old thing. We must do a better job of serving our community in new and different ways. I will have a great undersheriff in Jim Halsey, a 30-year Navy veteran, who also

has almost 30 years in law enforcement experience as well. Jim Halsey is the current jail division captain and we are a great team. Together we will recruit, hire and retain the best deputy sheriff's to serve our community. Douglas County needs leaders to be involved in their communities and be invested in it, not just the title. It takes leadership, accountability and experience to be a successful sheriff, not endorsements.

How are you going to deal with people driving under the influence of marijuana?: Many of the same techniques used in determining if someone is driving under the influence of alcohol are used for driving under the influence of marijuana, or other drugs. The deputy administers a series of field sobriety tests to the driver. If the driver shows impairment during those tests, which the officers are trained to detect, the suspect is placed under arrest and a warrant is requested from a judge to draw two samples of blood to be analyzed. The case is then submitted to the DA's Office for prosecution and the DMV is notified for the suspect's license to be suspended. If someone is impaired while driving, it doesn't matter the substance, impaired is impaired and they are unsafe to operate a motor vehicle.

What do believe is needed for a good relationship between the sheriff's department and county commissioners?: I believe good and consistent communication is needed between the sheriff and the county commissioners. It is vital to keep the commissioners updated on current trends in law enforcement, and what the sheriff's office's needs are to most effectively serve the citizens of Douglas County. We are all working toward a common goal of keeping Douglas County a great place to live and work. We must work together as a team and that starts with good communication.

If the commissioners cut your budget by 10 percent, what program or people would you cut? Please be specific.: A 10 percent cut in the sheriff's budget would be detrimental. Our current yearly budget is approximately \$6.5 million. Out of

that, approximately 82 percent is in salaries and benefits, leaving 18 percent in services and supplies. A deputy sheriff position with salaries and benefits is approximately \$100,000 per year. A 10 percent cut in our budget would mean having to lay off approximately seven deputy positions. I would be forced to eliminate our Street Enforcement Team which is made of up three detectives, plus a fourth narcotic detective assigned to the Tri-Net, and I would eliminate three general investigator positions. This would ensure that our jail division, which we are mandated by law to operate, would continue to function normally and that our patrol division would continue to operate normally enabling us to still respond to calls for service as quickly as possible. Our three remaining investigators would be burdened with many additional cases and we would have no one working undercover narcotics. We would become more reactionary in our law enforcement and less preventative.

What is your relationship with businesses at Lake Tahoe that work with the sheriff's department on various events? If anything, what would you consider changing?: We currently work with the Tahoe Chamber of Commerce and the Tahoe Visitor Authority on events like the Amgen bike race and other race events that come to Tahoe every year. We also work with the Lake Tahoe casinos for the annual concert events, 4th of July, and New Year's celebrations and also the annual Edgewood Celebrity Golf Tournament. Our deputies provide the security for these events and we currently enjoy a very good working relationship with these businesses. I think we do a very good job and I would ensure we keep ourselves and our business partners up to date on current trends in law enforcement and use best practices to ensure we provide the best law enforcement services possible to the public. When I was the patrol captain at the lake, I was very involved in the chamber and with all the casinos and local businesses. Since leaving that position, I believe the sheriff's office has not been as actively involved or invested in the lake. I would ensure that

the lake has a sheriff's office presence and we would become re-invested in the lake and all its activities and businesses.

Deputies use targets to practice marksmanship. Is there a better way to train people so not so many unarmed people are being shot? Please elaborate.: We currently utilize the Virtra Force Simulator that all deputies here at the sheriff's office attend on a regular basis. The Virtra system is a state-of-the-art video simulator, enabling officers to train for the most difficult real-world situations, including ambushes, active shooters, and maintaining full situational awareness during extreme stress. Officer presence, communication skills training, tactical de-escalation training, Taser, and deadly force, are all available for simulation using standard-issue weapons.

If you could make the rules for New Year's Eve at Stateline, what would they be?: As sheriff, I would continue with what we currently do now. Our goal is to protect the citizens and tourists in Douglas County year-round. My rule would be for the public to celebrate the New Year peacefully, respect one another, and not drink and drive. I would assist in helping to acquire free transportation "dial-a-ride" so we can help prevent drunken drivers. We are there to work with our partners the casinos and I would be open to any new and different suggestions they might have that would help them and their businesses be successful on New Year's.

Douglas County sheriff's deputies make less than South Lake Tahoe police officers and El Dorado County sheriff's deputies. Does this hamper efforts to recruit employees?: No.

Do you believe deputies should be paid more? Why or why not? If yes, how would you go about getting them more money?: Nevada has no state income tax which helps to offset the higher pay in California, that does have an income tax. I believe the deputy pay scale is competitive, and our officers top out at a very similar rate as our neighboring agencies.

The problem is the initial pay that we offer to new officers is \$2-\$3 less than neighboring jurisdictions. I would like to see our deputies starting wages be more competitive. The collective bargaining unit needs to negotiate these terms. As sheriff, I would do everything in my power to support that.

What is lacking in the department right now in terms of personnel or equipment or other resources? How would you address those needs?:

With the ever increasing mental health population in Douglas County, I would have the Mobile Outreach Safety Team (MOST), increase its services from one day a week to three-five days a week to keep up with the demand. The MOST Team is made up of a specially trained deputy in dealing with the mentally ill, a paramedic and a social worker. They currently work one day a week and visit with a case load of mentally ill people in Douglas County. The MOST team is currently funded under a grant and I would seek to increase funding through additional grants to keep the MOST team available more often.

What do you think is the biggest issue facing Douglas County Sheriff's Office and how do you plan to resolve it?:

I think our mentally ill population is our biggest concern. The mentally ill population is on the rise in Douglas County and I believe in order to stay proactive in addressing that issue, our MOST Team is our greatest tool.

Body cameras are about to be required throughout Nevada. What are the pros and cons?:

The pros are that they bring accountability and transparency to incidents where force is used and have shown to have a reduction in complaints from citizens. The cons are that the upfront costs are very expensive and the videos are expensive to store. There are also privacy concerns. The public is now on film and may be less likely to come forward to give information for fear of being on film.

Tell us something about yourself that people might not already

know?: I am an artist. I draw, airbrush and paint and I also am an avid wood-worker. I also enjoy, running, jet skiing, fly fishing, snowboarding, camping and hiking. I am also an abalone diver, spear fisherman and scuba diver.