

SLIDELL BUSINESS News and Notes

Sparks fly at forum for D.A. candidates

St. Tammany Chamber sponsors event

By KEVIN CHIRI
Slidell news bureau

SLIDELL – Members of the St. Tammany Chamber who attended the candidate forum for District Attorney last week were entertained thoroughly with charges and counter-charges back-and-forth, even including one response of "that's a lie!"

The new parish Chamber group hosted the one-on-one candidate's forum at The Greyhouse in Mandeville.

At the end of the day, incumbent District Attorney Warren Montgomery confidently defended the work by his staff in the past five-and-a-half years since he took office in 2015, while challenger Vincent Wynne continued to claim he is "the only law and order candidate" in the field.

years after Walter Reed held the position for three decades. However, that long stint in office came crashing down several years ago when Reed was charged with abuse of office and fraud, eventually getting convicted and going to jail.

Montgomery has been the new face in the 22nd Judicial District Court since then and admittedly ruffled some law enforcement feathers by revamping the screening division.

However, he says things have settled down with solid improvement overall for the office that he claims includes an 8 percent increase in the felony conviction rate and 16 percent decrease in the time from arrest to court.

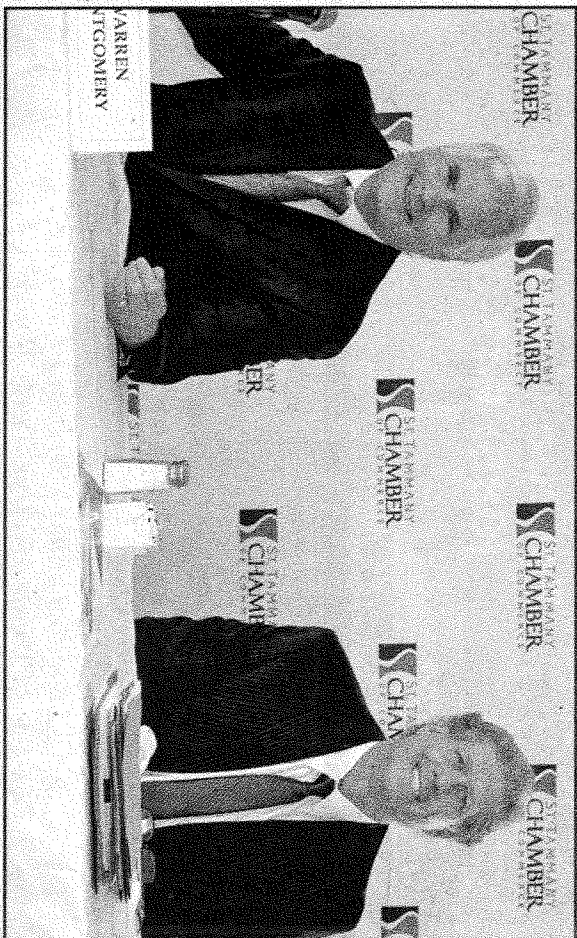
"Six years ago this office had difficulties and my election was a mandate to instill confidence back into the

and had planned to be the third candidate in the field, Wynne stated that in the past three years there were 156 domestic abuse cases in Slidell court, but 48 percent of them were dropped by the DA's Office, only four cases went to trial and there were no convictions.

Montgomery responded by saying they dropped a lot of cases since both the man and woman were charged in many cases, "and at the end of the day you can't charge both of them. So we dropped charges against one or the other."

Nothing the large number of cases not prosecuted, Wynne said "those were women who were beaten or strangled and the cases got dropped."

The challenger also questioned why the DA's Office is only holding 45 jury trials a year



Incumbent District Attorney Warren Montgomery (left) faced off against challenger Vincent Wynne in Mandeville for a public candidate's forum sponsored by the St. Tammany Chamber. The election is set for Nov. 3 as Montgomery tries to win his second term in office. (Staff photo courtesy of the St. Tammany Chamber.)

Montgomery supported the idea, while Wynne did not.

One battle Montgomery had to fight in his first term was a court case against the parish that questioned if the DA's Office had to be doing that." Both candidates continued to show support for diversion and specialty courts, but they argued eight years when he worked for Reed's office as an assistant district attorney. And when the candidates were allowed to ask each other a question, Wynne said "Mr. Montgomery, you