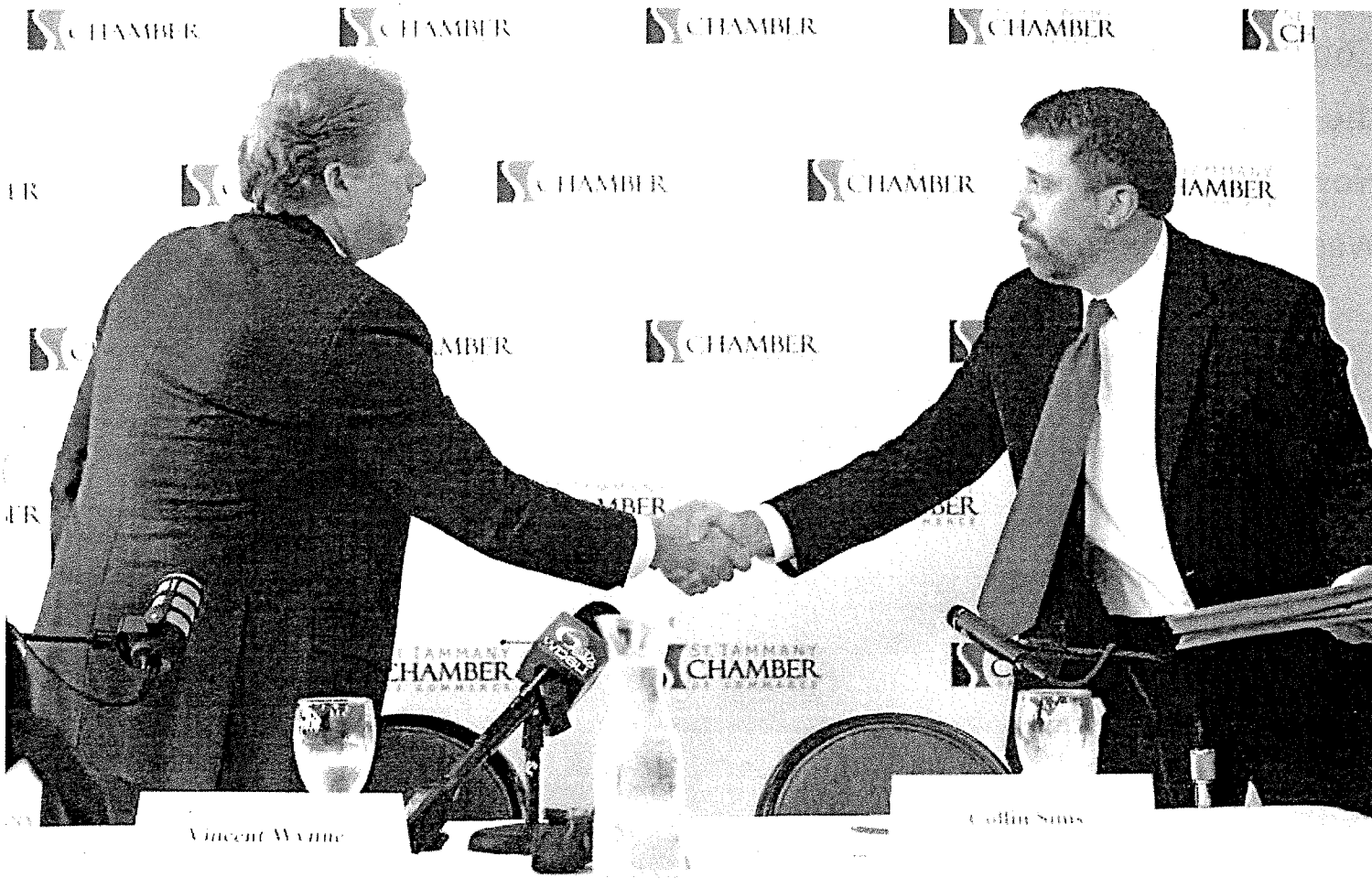


Northshore DA candidates Collin Sims and Vincent Wynne trade barbs during forum

Northshore DA candidate Collin Sims accused his opponent Vincent Wynne of lying about his experience

By ALEX LUBBEN | Staff writer

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Vincent Wynne and Collin Sims, candidates in the race to be 22nd Judicial District Attorney, shake hands at a St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce forum held Feb. 22 at Beau Chene near Mandeville.

PHOTO BY GRANT THERKILDSEN

The gloves are starting to come off in a district attorney's race on the northshore that's heating up in its final stretch.

During a forum Thursday hosted by the St. Tammany Chamber of Commerce, interim District Attorney Collin Sims accused Vincent Wynne of lying about his resume by claiming prosecutorial experience that Sims says Wynne doesn't have. Wynne, meanwhile, accused Sims of over-managing his assistant district attorneys, called attention to a backlog of cases on the DA's docket, and pitched running the office more like a business.

Sims and Wynne, who both noted they grew up in the area near Beau Chene Country Club where the forum took place, are vying to win the remainder of the term of 22nd Judicial District Attorney Warren Montgomery, who died in November after battling cancer. The district includes St. Tammany and Washington parishes.

The election is March 23.

“You deserve an honest district attorney,” said Sims, who was Montgomery's chief assistant and became interim DA. “We should be telling you what we've really done, not trying to fool you and make up our resumes.”

Sims contends that Wynne doesn't have serious prosecutorial experience, and handled only "tickets and misdemeanors" during his time working for former district attorney Walter Reed, who was convicted on federal corruption charges in 2016.



Wynne, for his part, pitched himself as a leader with business acumen, capable of running a lean district attorney's office that would be defined by transparency. In contrast to his opponent, Wynne said, he actually knows what it means to "run a budget" and "make payroll, as an attorney who's run his own private practice.

Collin Sims

PHOTO BY GRANT THERKILDSEN

"I'm going to lean up that office and make sure that we're doing more with less," Wynne said.

He also accused Sims of misrepresenting the authority granted to assistant district attorneys in his office to recommend defendants for diversion programs, designed to get people help after they commit low-level offenses rather than place them in jail.



Vincent Wynne

PHOTO BY GRANT THERKILDSSEN

Sims is pitching himself as a hard-nosed prosecutor, an attorney that knows how to tackle difficult criminal cases, and is deeply familiar with the ins and outs of the District Attorney's Office.

Wynne, by contrast, cites his management experience as making him better suited for the job. He emphasized that he would try to generate sources of revenue for the DA's Office without relying on the parish government to allocate funds or seeking any new taxes.

“We need to self-generate funds in order to make this work,” Wynne said.

Sims said that no matter how much funding the DA's office has, he's capable of running the office well. “I don't need any additional funding,” he said. “I'm not asking for any new taxes. I don't need them.”

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