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St. Tammany Parish District Attorney candidates face off in candidate forum

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Arielle Brumfield 

Reporter

The two candidates running for Northshore District Attorney, Collin Sims and Vincent Wynne presented themselves to business leaders and the community on Thursday during a St. Tammany Parish Chamber of Commerce District Attorney Candidates forum.

Sims, who served under former District Attorney Warren Montgomery, is currently the interim DA. He tells WDSU he plans to continue, if elected, running an office that promotes positive intervention for victims while also fairly prosecuting defendants.

Wynne, also a litigator is hoping to sweep the seat and serve as a fiscally responsible and accessible district attorney.

Support for specialty courts, mental health and drug rehabilitation resources, the use of body cameras for law enforcement and mentorship programs for juvenile delinquents are where the candidates found commonalities.

Things got dicey on the topic of how money should be managed in the district attorney's office which gets about \$5.5 million from both St. Tammany and Washington Parishes.

"I've run the office with a million dollars less," said Sims. "An expert from the parish from when we were engaged in negotiations for our budget actually concluded that we run the DA's office in St. Tammany with \$3 million less than the average."

Wynne claims the DA's office is not properly managing funds.

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"I believe that in the office we are able to self-generate funds," Wynne said. "I think there is sufficient money in the budget to actually run that office. I truly believe the office is overstaffed and it needs to be cleaned up."

Both candidates vowed not to raise taxes and challenge each other's resumes.

Sims told WDSU News, "The problem with my opponent is that his experience as a prosecutor is limited to 18 years ago handling misdemeanors and tickets. He's never run a felony docket, never picked a jury, he's never done a criminal investigation."

Wynne said, "I've tried over 400 cases, as a civil litigator. I've tried jury trials as well. I think you have to understand that this is not a prosecutor's job this is a job for an administrator that has those experiences and I have that experience."

The election is in March.

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