

DA candidates Sims and Wynne trade barbs

BY ALEX LUBBEN

Staff writer

The gloves are coming off in the 22nd Judicial District Attorney's race that's heating up in its final stretch.

During a forum on Feb. 22 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."



PHOTO BY GRANT THERKLUJSEN
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.

Sims contends that Wynne doesn't have serious prosecutorial experience and handled only "tick-ets 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 run his own private practice."

"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.

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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was sort of expecting you were going to have to deal more with that.

"The storm surge event ... that's the thing we need to keep thinking about. We need to figure out how to

The city should also consider creating "stormwater parks," which are green areas that can serve as retention ponds during floods. Such parks could provide localized benefits in areas especially prone to high water.

In the wake of the flood resilience plan, Councilman Rick Danielson asked, "What comes next?"

