

# SOLICITOR CIRCUIT 9 – BERKELEY, CHARLESTON

## EXPANDING/ENHANCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REPORTING EFFORTS

Would you support efforts to enhance/expand methods for reporting in South Carolina?

**YES**

Ben Pogue III, Democratic

*“Victims need safe spaces to escape harm, safe processes and trained allies to validate and protect them, and options that they are comfortable with--options they trust. As Solicitor--which is like District Attorney, in charge of prosecuting serious crimes--the first step is to prosecute abusers consistently, thoroughly, and transparently, in accordance with the needs of the victim. Our first priority is to demonstrate that victims will be believed, validated, and collaborated with according to their needs. Within the Solicitor’s office I will mandate expanded training for advocates and staff that helps pave the way for each victim to be treated with dignity and respect--regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or socioeconomic status. We will have a diverse staff of attorneys and administrators to demonstrate to every community that we respond to them with an understanding of their life experiences. In order to truly pave the way for increased reporting, that is only the beginning. We must have a multifaceted, holistic approach to the critical threshold issue of underreporting.*

*I have already begun laying the groundwork for expanded use of Family Justice Centers, restorative justice options, and public health reporting that allows for a non-law enforcement response to any domestic or intimate partner violence report. Family Justice Centers involve collaboration between the justice system and public-private partnerships, and allow victims --with children and even pets-- to be immediately protected from their abuser, and separated according to the needs of the victim. I’m committed to expanding dedicated domestic violence courts, where judges are better trained to recognize the threat of continuing violent abuse, and the necessity for safe spaces in the entire judicial process (and protection from manipulation of the victim by the abuser). Restorative justice options can be created at fairly low cost. Although they are not the path for everyone, they can circumvent some of the barriers to reporting, including the perceived threat of an escalation of violence due to the risk of criminal penalties.” – B. Pogue III*

**YES**

Scarlett A. Wilson, Republican

*“The first thing I did was ensure that all of my Special Victims Prosecutors and Advocates were continually “touching base” with victims during the lockdown. I mandated contact so that we could raise the awareness that we are still open and that police are still responding so that victims know that we and law enforcement are still ready and available to serve. We have selected as our first trial since the lockdowns a DV murder. Publicity during this trial should help raise that awareness.*

## ELECTION 2020

### DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE POLICY QUESTIONNAIRE



*My Special Victims Prosecutors helped develop and lead the Tri-County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) which includes members from government agencies, community organizations, educators, victim advocates, and faith-based leaders. The council seeks to increase community*

*awareness regarding domestic violence prevention, victim support, and perpetrator accountability. It does this through creating a solid community network between its participating organizations, as well as pairing with other groups in order to educate the public about the dangers of domestic violence our area. Now, more than ever, we are relying on this group to help with the COVID ramifications on domestic violence.*

*Finally, we will continue working with Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team. This is a multi-disciplinary team which seeks to enhance the safety of victims and the accountability of batterers. The Team does this by conducting detailed reviews of domestic fatalities and then preparing and publishing objective information gained from these reviews. The resulting information is used as a tool for identifying gaps in system responses, improving data collection, and implementing recommendations to create a coordinated community approach to ending domestic violence through enhancing efforts to train systems on better responses, identifying points for intervention and prevention, and providing a forum for increasing communication and collaboration throughout the community.*

*These groups and the insight we gain from them will be important moving forward should the COVID situation not improve, soon. Because the COVID situation came on abruptly and has lasted so long, the things we learn, will give us valuable insight should we experience this for longer than we expect and should we face another natural disaster.” – S.A. Wilson*

#### SUPPORT FOR GOING BEYOND CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE

**Would you support the creation of a statewide plan to effectively address the issues of domestic and sexual violence beyond the criminal justice response?**

YES

Ben Pogue III, Democratic

*“I have already begun advocating for an increase in shelters for victims of abuse--currently there are shelters for victims of domestic violence in only about 1/3 of our state’s counties, even though there are abused pet shelters in all 46. We need dedicated state funding for at least one shelter in every county. Additionally, I will advocate for statewide support of a felony strangulation statute, expanded use of domestic violence courts, and required standardized training of all law enforcement officers in response to potential domestic violence situations.” – B. Pogue III*

YES

Scarlett A. Wilson, Republican

*“I would support a victim-centric approach that provides for a “Family Justice Center” in each County. Each county should have a location for “wrap around” services for special victims (domestic and sexual abuse victims). Unlike some, I do not believe solicitors should run these. Instead, they should be funded and operated by a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, or a municipal or county government. Such*

centers can more effectively support the process of “leaving” which we know is not an event but a process. A Family Justice Center takes the focus away from arrest and prosecution and helps encourage victims to get healthy and get out because they do not have to be overwhelmed with thoughts of courtrooms and trials. While arrests and prosecutions are vital, getting victims and their families safe is the priority. Arrests and prosecutions can come when the victim is ready. Having such centers can help in that regard. The City of Charleston is moving forward with such a plan and I have been supportive in that effort.” – S.A. Wilson

## **INCREASED FOCUS ON PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

**Do you believe our state needs to increase its focus on the prevention of domestic and sexual violence?**

**YES**

**Ben Pogue III, Democratic**

“Prevention starts with connection to the community. Specifically with domestic violence, we need to connect with communities to cultivate a discussion about domestic violence. Each of my deputy solicitors (prosecutors) will be at a community meeting every three months. That presence and those discussions are the key to gathering data on where domestic violence occurs, where it may be passed down from generation to generation, and what the impediments are to eliminating it.

Prevention also requires a holistic approach. To facilitate partnerships and sharing of services and data, I’ve created our Community Action Team (<https://www.votebenpogue.com/communityactionteam>), which will be a permanent part of the Solicitor’s Office when I’m elected. Our team consists of community representatives who are connected to various networks and issues that intersect with justice; they include victim’s advocacy (including domestic and intimate partner violence), healthcare, education, and mentoring. Integrating the mentoring community and partnering it with healthcare allows us to identify children who have witnessed or experienced this violence--often one of the most important factors influencing later abuse. Partnering with healthcare helps us use data to map where abuse may have a generational or geographical component, in order to help focus educational and therapeutic efforts. Our Community Action Team is the tool to tackle domestic and intimate partner violence from many angles at once--and to stop the cycle of such violence.” – B. Pogue III

**YES**

**Scarlett A. Wilson, Republican**

“I would continue to collaborate with our partners as described above because successful prosecutions should help prevent future harms. I encourage an educational curriculum in our schools that, in an age appropriate way, introduces the concept that domestic violence is wrong and should not be the norm. Young boys should know that it is unacceptable and simply wrong to beat and abuse women and young girls should know that they have options and do not have to tolerate being abused. We know that in most cases, domestic violence is a learned, i.e., taught behavior. Our educational, and religious leaders, need to teach an alternative.” – S.A. Wilson

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## **SUPPORT ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICE PROVIDERS**

**Would you support additional state funding be allocated to victim service providers?**

**Do you believe additional federal funding should be allocated to victim service providers?**

**YES & YES**

Ben Pogue III, Democratic

*“South Carolina’s federal elected officials must vote to fully support VAWA, and our state legislators must work to pave the way for greater use of STOP grants and collaboration with VAWA initiatives on the state level. The success of any federal initiatives are predicated upon the support of local initiatives to educate the public and increase reporting and awareness. The messages to the public must emphatically demonstrate through words and actions: that abuse will not be tolerated; that victims will be believed; that safe spaces and procedures for everyone will be prioritized--regardless of race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, or religion. As mentioned above, solutions must be multifaceted and holistic, including: varied pathways for reporting and resolution that are safe and accessible to any victim; tremendous increases in training; and integration of law enforcement, justice, and public health”. – B. Pogue III*

**YES & YES**

Scarlett A. Wilson, Republican

*“I see many duplicated, redundant, competing 501(c)(3) type organizations and it concerns me because more may not be better. Consolidated efforts in times of financial crisis should be encouraged by all of us involved. We all have to work harder at helping our lawmakers understand that preventing DV pays for itself over time. An early investment in education and victim support services can reduce societal and fiscal costs in the long run. All of us who provide victim services have to lobby for targeted cuts, instead of across-the-board cuts so that critical services, like those we provide to DV victims and families, can be spared.” – S.A. Wilson*