

## Stop the Outer Loop Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name

Charlie Castlen

### **The Outer Loop has been tabled for now. What is your stance on the Outer Loop proposal and any future bypass that may be proposed?**

The Outer Loop Study ended with a no build recommendation. The study concluded stating that the road is not needed. Let me be clear, I do NOT support building a road that is not needed.

### **What is your stance on Highway 56 improvements and what do you propose?**

Highway 56 is a state highway. Employees in the state Division of Highways analyze crash data, fatalities, and other data to determine what improvements are needed and where. Lacking this specific data, I would say generally improving turning lanes and widening the road would be beneficial.

There are times when specific needs are known and we can get support from our state elected officials to expedite needed improvements. A perfect example is the raising of Hwy 60 near Oakford Road. It flooded several times in the past 10-15 years shutting off the community of Stanley from the rest of Daviess County. Working with our state delegation, we were able to move this improvement to the top of the worklist and get it completed. As specific needs on Highway 56 present, I would work for a positive resolution like we accomplished on this important Highway 60 project.

### **As county lands continue to be developed, what is your stand on future annexations of county lands into the city of Owensboro?**

My stand or the stand of any other county elected official is not relevant unless the state legislature changes annexation laws. Currently, annexation happens one of two ways. First, consensually, meaning the owners and the city reach an agreement where both agree on the terms of the annexation. Second, the city annexes what they want and unless the voters living in the area to be annexed petition for a vote to defeat the annexation, the annexation will happen. If a valid petition is certified and a voting day set, the majority of those voting need to vote no to the annexation or it will happen.

If you recall, a few years ago the City of Owensboro came close to annexing ALL county schools that are near the city limits. I suspect it was due only to considerable public pushback that they backed away from that plan. However, legally, there was nothing to prevent this action because no registered voters lived at those addresses. I have reached out to both Senator Matt Castlen and soon to be Senator Gary Boswell to let them know the annexation rules need to be changed. While KACO (Kentucky Association of Counties) supports needed changes, KLC (Kentucky League of Cities) likely will oppose the changes. Due to state laws governing taxes and fees, county government loses revenue when a business is annexed into the city and a county volunteer fire department loses dues revenues when an existing residence or existing business annexes into the city.

### **Do you think that Daviess County government should provide or pay for ditch cleaning of major waterways on private property?**

Daviess County government has from time to time paid for ditch cleaning on major waterways in the county. The most well known was the significant cleanup funded primarily with federal and state grants after the ice storm. This was a widespread natural disaster unlike any experienced in most of our lifetimes.

Since my election as a Daviess County Commissioner, the guidance received from Daviess County Attorney Claud Porter is that county tax dollars can only be used for a public purpose. Generally, just cleaning a private ditch does not fall into that public purpose. I have reached out to KACO attorneys for additional guidance, as this position stated by Daviess County Attorney Claud Porter has NOT been well received by our neighbors who farm near Panther Creek. KACO's position supports our county attorney's position.

There have been occasions where we have used county crews and equipment to clear blockages. When the Wyndcrest Drive neighborhood was flooding before we did the buyout that relocated these citizens, we removed a beaver dam that created a near total blockage to the ditch - the blockage was contributing to flooding our road and the upstream neighborhood. On other occasions, we have cleared debris when the blockage was both threatening to wash out our road and flood an upstream neighborhood.

Several years ago, we created a Drainage Commission that recommended criteria for us to adopt and follow. We have followed that criteria since its adoption. There have been a number of times that we have cleared blockages following that criteria.

### **What are some areas of the current county budget that could be cut to lower taxes?**

As a current county commissioner, I am pleased with the savings achieved over the last 11 years. From 2012 to 2019, due to changes in our insurance bid process and changes made to the administration of our self-insurance plan, we achieved annual cost savings of over \$500,000 a year. Another \$2.5 million in savings occurred when we joined the state's insurance pool. Additional savings exceeding \$200,000 annually resulted due to changes made in our inhouse phone system. Additional savings have been realized from internal reorganizations and consolidation of employee responsibilities over the years. As your County Judge Executive, I will continue to work for additional savings.

One final note, the current Fiscal Court voted just last month (February) to remove the 4% increase in the insurance tax that was put in

place by two of my opponents for County Judge Executive. Due to actions I supported as your county commissioner, the tax was removed nearly 8 years early.

**Do you see our Planning and Zoning process as an impediment to business growth? How could it work better?**

Over the years, I have heard a number of criticisms of Planning and Zoning in our community - from specific staff criticism to criticism of the entire process. I know we have made progress over the years. Are we perfect? No. Continued improvements need to be made.

As County Judge Executive, I would have an open door to those who feel wronged by Planning and Zoning so I can respond to their concerns - assisting them directly.

I have worked behind the scenes a number of times over the past several years to achieve favorable outcomes for business owners. I am pleased with these outcomes. As your County Judge Executive, I assume more individuals would reach out to me for assistance. I look forward to working with each of them.

**Serious crime seems to be way up in Daviess County. How will you work toward protecting residents and their properties?**

Just a few years ago, it seems the major issue for law enforcement in our community was meth labs. Due to changes in state and federal laws, the labs are no longer a major issue. As any of us can tell, we have had a surge in shootings in our community. As your County Judge Executive, my goal is to make sure that the needs of our Daviess County Sherriff's office are met. As a County Commissioner these past 11 years, I am pleased with the support Daviess County Fiscal Court has provided to the Daviess County Sherriff's Office. I am confident that former Daviess County Sherriff Keith Cain and current Daviess County Sherriff Barry Smith would speak positively of the financial support given to their office these past 11 years.

**Do you agree with the current occupational tax structure? Do you think current tax rates are fair? If not, how would you work to change it?**

Our current occupational tax structure is a flat rate of 1%. Counties are limited by state law on revenue sources - these include primarily property taxes that carry a 4% annual cap (or is subject to recall by the voters); occupational tax; net profits license tax; and insurance tax.

Prior to the 4% cap being implemented, very few counties had an occupational tax. Today, most counties have an occupational tax. This 4% cap was put in place because of the high inflation of the 1970s, something we are experiencing again today. The bottom line is, whether you support the cap or not, it has moved the tax burden from those who are property owners to those who are working for a living. Some taxpayers fall into both buckets, but obviously, there are some who no longer work for a living and their tax burden has been lessened while the burden for those who work for a living has been increased. I think whether or not I am in agreement to the structure or not is not relevant, it is a system that has been forced upon us by state law and unless the state legislature moves away from the restrictions that exist, we will be forced to live with what we have.