



BARBALUNGA FOR SHERIFF

Press Release: 09/03/22

“Time For Change – Justice That Works”

Contact: Katherine Yon, Communications Director: klyon1105@aol.com

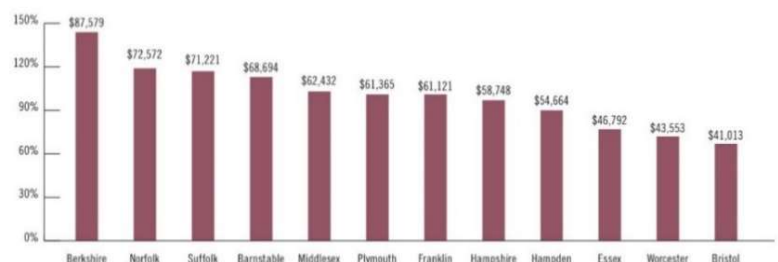
Correctional Officers’ Union Does Not Endorse Tom Bowler

BERKSHIRE COUNTY--The union local of the International Brotherhood of Correctional Officers (IBCO Local 297), which is part of the National Association of Governmental Employees, as first reported in an August 17 Letter to the Editor in the Berkshire Eagle, will not be endorsing incumbent Tom Bowler in this September’s Primary election for Berkshire County Sheriff.

According to Sheriff Candidate Alf Barbalunga, IBCO local officials informed him on July 12 that the union has decided to remain neutral, and will not endorse Bowler. “In our opinion, that’s a telling decision on the union’s part. The incumbent has been in office for 12 years---it’s very significant that the union representing the front-line workers has decided to remain neutral. I want to be crystal clear though, they are not endorsing me either, but I am not the 12-year incumbent”, Barbalunga said.

Barbalunga said the Berkshire County Jail has experienced one of the largest inmate population declines in the state, yet its state appropriation has climbed by more than \$4.5 million compared to fiscal year 2012. Moreover, under Sheriff Bowler the cost per inmate has been among the highest in the state.

Figure 5: Total expenditure per inmate, FY 2018



Sources: MassINC's analysis of Massachusetts's Office of the Comptroller data request and Department of Correction Weekly Count Sheets

“The Sheriff’s Office today is working with fewer than half the inmates it had when the current Sheriff took office,” Barbalunga said. “The upper management payroll has expanded---with at least 14 top Executive Leadership Team positions with titles like CFO, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent I, II and IV. The jail is spending at least \$2 million this year on a cluster of 15 top paid positions for an inmate population of around 162 inmates.” It is also important to note that executives, including the sheriff, receive approximately 3.5% in raises per year on average, while the union corrections officers get 1.6% (<http://cthrupayroll.mass.gov>).

Barbalunga says, “If elected, I hope that my leadership style and capacity for understanding the pressures and choices that sheriff’s staff had to make this election season, will reassure folks that politics will fall to the past, and we will get down to doing good work on day one.”

"I have only the highest level of respect for the frontline correctional staff at the jail, who are the backbone of the facility, and if I am given a chance by the voters to work with these exemplary men and women, I look forward to immediately demonstrating to them, that better days actually start on January 4, 2023", says Barbalunga.

"I began my career in 1991 as a line corrections officer," Barbalunga explains. He has served as a chief probation officer with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Trial Court Probation Service, a position he began in 2004. He currently supervises the Southern Berkshire District, which is the second-largest district jurisdiction along the Connecticut and New York state borders. Before becoming a chief probation officer, he was an acting chief, an officer-in-charge, a juvenile probation officer, an adult probation officer, and a courthouse intern.

"My experience as both a correctional officer and jail officer, had major impact on how I view the Sheriff's Office--and our opportunities to help inmates return to the community as productive citizens. Our job begins at incarceration, but we must remain involved in the community for many years after discharge," Barbalunga said.

Instead of expanding top administrative staff, Barbalunga would consider adding more direct service capacity to the budget, including care workers placed in the community to enhance successful reintegration with family, friends and employers. He says, "In the long run an investment in community placements pays off for everyone. Reincarceration is costly and unproductive for inmates and taxpayers alike."

As of this press release, we are also not aware of any media reporting of the other 13 Commonwealth of Massachusetts sheriffs, or any recently retired sheriffs, who have endorsed the incumbent either. Barbalunga says, "I think that is smart of these sheriffs, including the Hamden County Sheriff, to stay out of this race, and if I am elected, I look forward to working with my new colleagues and supporting them, if called upon to do so, starting next year."

Regarding police support, Barbalunga says, "I have only respect for any Berkshire County police officers who are supporting the incumbent, and I never take it personally. Tom is a former Pittsfield Police detective, and he has also made it a point to create an employment pipeline to the jail, hiring many of his police officer friends into current management positions. This explains Tom's more punitive approach to law enforcement, as opposed to my rehabilitative efforts focusing on restorative justice and treatment. Additionally, I am grateful that a number of police chiefs and individual police officer's county wide have reached out to me to express their support for our campaign, as well as my plan to restore the regional lockup."

Alf has been a proud union member of AFL-CIO Local 1134 and AFL-CIO Local 285. Alf has also been a proud shop steward of SEIU Local 254. Lastly, Alf has been a proud regional steward of SEIU-NAGE Local 229, and SEUI-NAGE Local 118. "There is NO one that believes, more than I, in effective union representation. That is why my team and I hosted group meetings with the union throughout the summer and encouraged the members to bring any/all concerns to our attention, and ask whatever hard hitting questions they felt were important. We also made ourselves available for private meetings and phone inquiries with union members, who for various reasons, did not feel comfortable meeting in public with us", Barbalunga said.

“When we ideally win this election, we will not just talk the talk about transparency and union accessibility to leadership -- We will walk the walk, and have an open-door policy, to address any/all concerns, including the immediate implementation of a credible promotional process exam system”, Barbalunga said. Here is a link to many of Alf’s endorsements: <https://www.barbalunga.com/new-page-2>

-30-

TIME FOR CHANGE



JUSTICE THAT WORKS