



BARBALUNGA FOR SHERIFF

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“Justice That Works”

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Jail Budget Should Move Funding

To Correctional Officers & Direct Services/Inmate Rehab

BERKSHIRE COUNTY—Alf Barbalunga, candidate for Berkshire County Sheriff, began his law enforcement

career as a Correctional Officer in 1991 at the Berkshire County House of Correction. He says correctional officers and support services staff are the backbone of the facility. Barbalunga has enormous respect for the work front-line workers perform because he was one himself. “The staff who work on security, education, substance use counseling, and case management, are the ones who help inmates from returning for future incarcerations. That’s where the face-to-face work get done every day.”

Barbalunga 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.



Barbalunga says as sheriff he will look to move money out of what he calls “Bowler’s Executive Empire” and redirect dollars to direct inmate care. “Over the years, even as inmate population kept falling, Sheriff Bowler kept expanding his top Executive Leadership Team. The taxpayers not only pick up the tab for all these Executives with six figure salaries, we pay for their pensions after they leave the Jail.” Common sense dictates this is an unsustainable model for Berkshire County taxpayers.

Barbalunga says 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 2011. Furthermore, under Sheriff Bowler the cost per inmate had grown to \$87,579 by 2016, the highest in the state (*reported Mass Taxpayers Association*), and was estimated at over \$130,000 per inmate by 2021 (direct appropriation in 2021 was \$17.98 million/average of 137 inmates).

“The Sheriff’s Department today is working with fewer than half the inmates it had when the current sheriff took office,” Barbalunga says. “Yet the upper management payroll has expanded -- The top 15 paid employees made over \$2,000,000 combined in 2021, with an inmate population of around 156 as of this date.”

“The International Brotherhood of Correctional Officers (IBCO Local 297), which is part of the National Association of Governmental Employees (NAGE), has been right to advocate for better salaries and working conditions—and I will continue to support those efforts,” Barbalunga says. “Regardless of what the Sheriff’s Executive Leadership Team is messaging out to the rank-and-file membership, that if I am elected layoffs in the union ranks will occur, that is simply not true. Rather, I will hire more correctional officers to alleviate forced overtime assignments and also to support returning out women’s population back to Berkshire County.” Previously Barbalunga was a member of the following unions: AFL-CIO / Local 1134, AFL-CIO / Local 285, SEIU / Local 254 - Shop Steward & SEIU-NAGE / Locals 229 & 118 - Regional Steward.

“My experience as a previous union employee and union leader, including as a frontline correctional officer, jail officer, and probation officer, has had a 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 focused on providing assistance for many years after discharge,” explains Barbalunga.

Instead of continuous expansion of top administrative staff, Barbalunga would consider adding more direct service capacity to the budget, including educational staff and care workers placed in the community to enhance successful reintegration with family, friends and employers. “In the long run,” Barbalunga says, “an investment in community placements pays off for everyone. Reincarceration is costly and unproductive for inmates and taxpayers. We need to spend each dollar wisely.”

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