



BARBALUNGA FOR SHERIFF

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“Justice That Works”

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Barbalunga Seeks To End Bowler’s “Payroll Empire” By Eliminating A \$78,000 Part-Time “Ceremonial” Job

BERKSHIRE COUNTY—Alf Barbalunga released today the following statement in response to questions from the community about how Tom Bowler is misspending taxpayer money at the Berkshire County House of Correction & Jail, and where Alf can find savings in the budget to fund better education and rehabilitation:

“People often ask me: ‘How is Sheriff Bowler misspending money, and how will you save money to fund education and programming?’ The answer is simple: cut out frivolous, wasteful spending, hire more teachers, clinicians, and develop programming with that money.

For example, during my own research of the sheriff’s budget I found that the formerly UNPAID “ceremonial position” of the **Special Sheriff** has suddenly become a PAID part-time position, at \$78,000 per year.

Under Mass General Law (Ch. 37, § 5 & Ch. 37, § 4), a “Special Sheriff” is a role that becomes active and paid in the event that Sheriff Bowler dies or otherwise becomes incapacitated. Is he incapacitated? Is he unable to perform his duties?

The former Special Sheriff under Bowler was unpaid. Why is the Special Sheriff paid now? No one knows. There is no transparency.

The current Special Sheriff was formerly the Superintendent of the Berkshire County House of Corrections, earning \$156,000 annually under Sheriff Bowler until he retired in 2021. He now collects a state pension of \$117,000 - that’s the law, and that’s fair.

But after his former superintendent retired in 2021, however, Sheriff Bowler appointed him as Special Sheriff, a ceremonial position that in Berkshire County always had a salary of \$0. Now Sheriff Bowler has moved his former superintendent back on the payroll--paying him \$78,000 to hold the title of “Special Sheriff”.

Back when Tom Bowler first became sheriff, we were warned about sheriffs building “Empires.” This is the type of misspending that hurts morale among Sheriff Bowler’s rank and file employees. We can reallocate misspent money in “Bowler’s Empire” to shift unneeded “ceremonial” salaries to much-needed rehabilitation staff. \$78,000 represents at least 3 part-time teachers’ salaries.

On rare occasions, an employee with another primary role--such as deputy superintendent or a director of a program--might be appointed as “Special Sheriff” by a Massachusetts sheriff and would hold that ceremonial position in the event something happened to the sheriff. But that’s not the case here. This individual is retired and does not have another primary role.

The superintendent’s job has been filled by someone else, and that person earned over \$180,000 in 2021. There are 261 employees taking care of responsibilities in a total budget of roughly \$21 million.

The Special Sheriff isn't an active position, yet is receiving a salary. This "ceremonial position" appears to be an egregious abuse of taxpayer funds and a purely patronage position. This constitutes a betrayal of the public trust. This is "good ol' boy" patronage at its worst.

The Special Sheriff is historically a ceremonial, unpaid position, and reprogramming this \$78,000 for inmate rehabilitation can immediately fund and improve better services at the correctional facility, and ideally improve job skills, educational certifications, and reduce recidivism (or repeat crimes) following release.

This is just one example of potential misuse of funds that I will reallocate, while improving morale for the rank and file hard-working employees that are critical to the future success of the correctional facility.

We don't have to accept the premise that a sheriff has a right to build a "Payroll Empire" at taxpayers' expense. We will cut out frivolous spending and patronage wherever it is found."

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