

Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now - Tad Jude 01G9FXEF34WJ4YZX869FB35JF

CATHY WURZER: This fall, for the first time in 24 years, Hennepin County will have a new county attorney. It's an office with significance. The county attorney oversees adult and juvenile criminal cases, child protection, and other legal matters that come before the county. There are a record seven candidates running for office, and we're talking to each of them.

Today we have two candidates, Tad Jude and Mary Moriarty. Tad Jude is a former Washington County judge. Prior to that, he was a Hennepin County commissioner. Tad Jude started his public service as the youngest person elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives at the age of 20 back in 1972, serving five terms in the House and an additional six years in the state senate. At age 70, he's now running for Hennepin County attorney, and Tad Jude is on the line. Welcome to *Minnesota Now*.

TAD JUDE: Thank you, Cathy.

CATHY You've been quoted, Tad Jude, as saying you want to make crime illegal again. What does that mean?

WURZER:

TAD JUDE: Basically, we've all gotten a little stir crazy with the pandemic. And I think, in particular, in the city of Minneapolis and in Hennepin County, we've had certainly a breakdown of just normal, common law and order, so to speak. In fact, Tom Friedman described Minneapolis as "big swaths of my old hometown, Minneapolis, have been turned into a dangerous and dystopian ghost city, racked by gun violence."

And you look at July 4th, we had major problems. We had chaos in downtown Minneapolis, with commercial grade fireworks being aimed at people and from car to car and into apartments.

CATHY And as county attorney--

WURZER:

TAD JUDE: It was a very dangerous situation.

CATHY If you're county attorney, how might you crack down on that?

WURZER:

TAD JUDE: Well, I think what we need to do is get back to having the county attorney do its job-- follow the facts, the evidence, apply the law-- and just have the county attorney basically represent the citizens of the county, empower victims, make sure that victims have restitution, if at all possible, try to end the catch and release policies that have become commonplace, particularly with the pandemic.

I mean, our whole court system has become, in a way, paralyzed by the pandemic as so much of our downtown area and businesses become paralyzed. And we're just being-- to learn how to live with the pandemic again, how to live with COVID again-- have repeat violator or offenders not released. I know they're on probation and parole but not released without bail or conditions, and that's been a problem.

We've had fentanyl, of course, become a much bigger problem than in the past. Carjackings have skyrocketed about 300% from where they have been. So we're looking to apply the law equally and with due process. But look at the facts. The evidence apply the law and have appropriate consequences.

CATHY You mentioned some of the repeat-- I'm sorry, you mentioned some repeat offenders. And some folks who are working in the Minneapolis Police Department say they know that they see the same names come across the desk. Some of these are very young individuals. So I'm curious. I know you've said we have a broken juvenile justice system. If you're county attorney, how much you work to repair that broken juvenile justice system?

TAD JUDE: I believe my background, gives me the ability to work with the County Board, having served on the County Board. In fact, I chaired the public safety subcommittee. And over at the legislature, I chair the Hennepin County delegation. I can work with the legislators, try to fill the gap of the hole that we have for juvenile offenders right now.

In fact, parents came to me as a judge, and they said, do something. [CHUCKLES] And they would come to me and just to protect young people. And in the case of carjackings, for example, you have 19 and 20-year-olds who understand the system, so they'll recruit a 14 and 15-year-old to go steal the car knowing that they'll be released. And we can't have that continue in Hennepin County, and we need to have good support systems for young people who need them.

And the parents, they can be the best parents they can be. And that would mean replacing the county home school or St. Joseph's Home for Children. We don't have those anymore. And they provided stability. They provided the education. They provided health care. They provided a path forward for young people and the parents. The parents that they had problems with addiction, they could be the best parents they could be. And that's what Hennepin County needs to have in place.

CATHY WURZER: OK, so bring back the old Hennepin County Home School. Actually, several of your opponents have said the same thing. With the time we have left here, Tad Jude, I want to know what role should the Hennepin County attorney's office play in reviewing and prosecuting officer-involved killings. As you know, current County Attorney Mike Freeman has moved away from the grand jury system. Who should make those decisions as to charging officers?

TAD JUDE: Well, for starters, I believe we'd have to find out if there's a conflict of interest with the county attorney's office because I'd be collaborating with law enforcement in terms of trying to come up with best evidence. And if there's a conflict, it would have to go to another agency or another county Attorney.

The county grand jury has to be reformed. There's a need to reform so there's more accountability, more transparency. And I don't rule out using the grand jury. I think there are appropriate cases where you need another set of eyes, and the county attorney needs the advice of the grand jury, of course. But it does need to be a more transparent and accountable process, and that's what I would work to achieve.

CATHY WURZER: You've said that you want to exercise a color-blind application of the law. But there are confirmed reports of racial discrimination in the Minneapolis Police Department. So I'm curious, how do you have a color-blind application of the law in cases that come before you that may be tainted with discrimination because you're dealing with officers who are discriminated against those who have been arrested?

TAD JUDE: Well, I'm an absolute supporter of equal justice under the law. And some candidates have said, well, if you're an illegal immigrant, you're going to have a different criminal standard than if you're a legal resident of the county. And that doesn't work. I mean, you have to have equal protection and due process, and that's what our system of justice is built upon.

We need transparency and accountability and work with the post board to make sure that best practices are followed certainly by police departments, and now we have the human rights department reports. So I'm looking forward to the consent decree that appears to be in the works in terms of the human rights report in the Minneapolis Police Department because that's something that hopefully will address the issues that you've raised.

But we have to have equal application of the law-- just follow the facts, follow the evidence, and apply the law regardless of your color or your race or your creed or any other protected status you might have. Many people have complained to me about-- they've said, well, you have more men in jail than women. Well, [CHUCKLES] it's because of the actions of the individual. I mean, it's not that we're trying to put more men in jail than women. It's just because of human activity, and we have to hold everyone accountable equally

CATHY Before you go, I outlined your resume. It's a very long resume. You've been around a while with being a state lawmaker and a judge. Why do you want to be Hennepin County attorney now?

TAD JUDE: Well, I've always enjoyed being a problem solver, and we've got a problem in Hennepin County. We need safer streets. We need safer neighborhoods and a safer county. We had children being killed. We've had a hundred homicides last year in the city of Minneapolis. Carjackings have gone up 300%.

And the July 4th chaos has to stop. We have to be able to go on Metro Transit and no longer feel there's a problem in terms of needles or defecation or whatever it might be. Even low-level livability crimes need to be addressed.

And I'm looking forward to bringing transparency and accountability to the office and professional management to the office. And like I said, just follow the facts, the evidence, and the law, and do all the functions that are in the civil end of the county attorney's office. It's often overlooked.

CATHY OK.

WURZER:

TAD JUDE: But child protection and civil commitment needs to be addressed.

CATHY All right. Judge Jude, I appreciate your time. Thank you so much.

WURZER:

TAD JUDE: Thanks, Cathy.

CATHY We've been talking to former Washington County judge, Tad Jude, who's running for Hennepin County attorney.

WURZER: