

TRAVIS KITCHENS FOR DISTRICT JUDGE

-serving Polk, San Jacinto and Trinity Counties



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October 26, 2017

Re: Announcement of my Candidacy for Judge of the 258th Judicial District Court

To The Voters of Polk, San Jacinto and Trinity Counties:

I would respectfully request a few minutes of your time to introduce myself and request your consideration of me when you go to vote in the March 6, 2018 Republican Primary Election for Judge of the 258th Judicial District Court. The 258th Judicial District covers Polk, San Jacinto and Trinity Counties. The Honorable Ernest McClendon, currently Judge of the 258th Judicial District Court, will be retiring at the end of 2018. I feel that I am uniquely qualified to fill this upcoming vacancy.

- After graduating from Baylor Law School in May 1977, and being admitted to the Texas Bar in November 1977, I moved to Trinity County in April of 1978, to work as your Assistant District Attorney for the 258th Judicial District. I had the honor to work with Joe Lynn Price, the 258th District Attorney, until I left the District Attorney's office in November 1981 and became partners with Groveton lawyer Joe Scott Evans. In January 2011, I moved my law practice to Onalaska.
- During the last 40 years of practicing law, both as a prosecutor, defense and civil lawyer, I have had the privilege of representing hundreds of victims of crime, citizens accused of crime, and citizens seeking justice on their claims in family and civil court. I have practiced law in numerous counties in our state, but primarily in Polk, San Jacinto and Trinity Counties.
- During my legal career, I worked with two of the better lawyers in this area, Joe Lynn Price and Joe Scott Evans, and have been involved in countless jury and non-jury trials. In addition to being admitted to practice law in all courts in the State of Texas, I am also admitted to practice law in both the United States Eastern and Southern District Courts, the United States Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the

United States Supreme Court. I served for six years on the State Bar of Texas Grievance Committee, one year of that as Chairperson. The Grievance Committee investigates complaints against attorneys in Texas. In 2009, I was elected as a Life Fellow with the Texas Bar Foundation “in recognition of service and devotion to the highest traditions of the Bar”. The Texas Bar Foundation solicits charitable contributions and provides funding to enhance the rule of law and the system of justice in Texas, especially for programs that relate to legal assistance for the underserved, the administration of justice, ethics in the legal profession, the encouragement of legal research, publications and forums, and education of the judicial branch of our government.

- I was born at Connally Air Force Base in Waco, Texas in 1952, the fourth of seven children of (then) Captain Travis and Delores Kitchens. My father flew combat missions in World War II over Germany and over North Korea during the Korean conflict. After serving in Korea, he eventually flew on B-52 nuclear bombers during the “cold war”, retiring in 1963 as a Lt. Colonel. After retirement from the Air Force, he moved our family back to his native Central Texas and then entered Baylor University. He graduated from Baylor Law School in 1967, in a law school class that included Livingston attorneys Gene Bush, Ernie McClendon, and (the late) Bill Jones. He practiced law in Killeen, Texas until his death in 1985. My mother turned 90 this past February. My remarkable mother raised seven children without losing her sanity, and my parents instilled in all of their children love of God and Country, competence, character and compassion.
- In 1970, I graduated from Robinson High School in Waco, and attended the University of Texas, McLennan Community College and Baylor University before being admitted to Baylor Law School, without graduating from college, in 1975. As mentioned, I received my Juris Doctor law degree in 1977.
- While at Baylor, I met the love of my life and we married in 1977. Susan and I have two adult children, Wil and Nate. Wil, age 31, has a high-end auto/racing shop in Houston – IDB Racing – builds race cars, and races motorcycles and cars. He has raced in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Colorado, including the Pike’s Peak International Hill Climb four times – once on a motorcycle and three times in his race cars. Nate, age 28, is a childhood cancer survivor, lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is a digital content manager for a solar energy company – Amenergy, Inc., and is a writer and producer at CSF Films. He is also an aspiring independent artist, cartoonist and movie maker. Susan is a long time teacher and educator at Groveton schools, having graduated from Baylor University in 1978 and receiving her Masters from Sam Houston State University a few years later; she also teaches

Spanish at Angelina College in Livingston at night and English to Hispanic members of First Baptist Church in Groveton.

- My passion, after my family, is music. I started to the University of Texas on a music scholarship, but ended changing my major to criminology and going to law school. Although I did not finish a music degree, I have played bass guitar in a variety of bands starting with my college bluegrass band – The Brazos River Rats – in 1974. In 1994, I opened a recording studio in Groveton – Stone Wall Studio – and have recorded many local artists and bands, as well as produced records of all genres of music, memorializing the talent of East Texas singers and musicians.
- In 1997, I started a rock, rhythm and blues band – The Stone Wall Rockers Rhythm and Blues Revue. We play primarily at benefits in the East Texas area, including an annual benefit for the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Children’s Cancer Hospital, in Houston. Susan is a classically trained pianist, and in addition to playing piano at the First Baptist Church in Groveton, plays piano and keyboards with The Rockers. Wil has played drums with The Rockers since he was 10. Nate has recorded and mixed videos of The Rats and The Rockers and other artists and designed CD covers and logos.
- I believe that all persons who come before the court are entitled to a considerate and fair evaluation of the evidence in their cases with appropriate application of the relevant law. I have witnessed the pain, anxiety, and fear of those persons who do and those who do not operate within the legal court system. I also believe that all persons who come before the court are entitled to respect and common courtesy, a fair and impartial hearing of their case, and to equal justice under the law.
- If the people of Polk, Trinity and San Jacinto Counties elect me to be their next Judge of the 258th Judicial District, I will bring sixty-five years of life experience (sixty-six years at the time of taking office), in addition to my forty years of practicing law. My life experience includes working my way through college and law school, including working at the Gatesville State School for Boys in 1974 and the Waco Methodist Home Children’s Psychiatric Hospital in 1976, being married for forty years, and enduring teenage children.
- I have participated, both as a prosecutor and as a defense attorney, in dozens of criminal jury trials ranging from capital murder to illegal deer hunting. I have handled over thirty appeals (including capital murder) in both criminal and civil cases.

- Throughout my forty years of practicing law, I have appeared in front of dozens of judges. I have observed how these judges who are entrusted with dispensing justice handle their courtroom and dispense justice – having seen the good, the bad and the ugly practices. I believe that with this experience, I will be able to better provide the citizens who find it necessary to be in the judicial system, both as criminal and civil litigants, their fair and just day in court.
- Making the decision to give up my law practice after forty years for public service is oddly, both difficult and easy. I have had the privilege and honor to represent literally thousands of citizens, and as your District Judge I would, obviously, not be able to continue to represent them. I like most of my clients so this makes this decision difficult. On the other hand, the decision is easy. My parents instilled in me civic responsibility and service to our country, family, and community. I started my legal career in this area in 1978 in service to you as an Assistant District Attorney for the 258th Judicial District. I request your vote to allow me to finish my legal career as your District Judge.
- I request your support to allow me to apply my sixty-five years experience of living and my forty years of practicing law in service to you, as your District Judge for the 258th Judicial District. I am fortunate to still be on this Earth after sixty-five years of life and I believe that all of my life experience and legal training and experience would benefit the community I have called home since 1978.
- The integrity of the judge's office is of utmost importance to me. I give you my pledge that if you trust me with your support and vote, I will live up to the values expressed in this introduction.

Regardless if you vote for me, please vote. My parents and millions of other Americans have sacrificed and fought for you to have that sacred right.

Respectfully,

Travis E. Kitchens, Jr.