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Candidate for Probate Judge  
Press Release – February 10, 2012

Response to Sheriff Sexton: Sheriff's Decision Concerning Animal Control Is Insufficient

On February 6, Sheriff Sexton notified the Tuscaloosa County Commission that his department will no longer be the first responders to all calls regarding animals. The Sheriff's decision, as a result of an incident where a young child was attacked by a vicious animal, is based upon his claim that he does not have sufficient staffing and that his department "will use our best efforts to send a unit to assist with that call (involving physical danger), if there is one (unit) available."

"The Sheriff's response to animal control is insufficient given that during the past 7 years, the County Commission has added approximately 15 deputies to his staff, taken over general animal control calls from the Sheriff, provided additional staff to oversee Court House security, etc.," says Mr. Wallace, who is running for Probate Judge and serves as Commissioner for District One. "As a parent of 3 children, I do not agree with the Sheriff's assessment that he does not have someone to assist in a call involving a vicious animal that has attacked someone and is still at large. I do not accept that the Sheriff had no available units to respond to the dog attack in Coker, given the increased staffing this Commission has provided. In fact, in any instance involving danger to our citizens, be it from vicious criminals, vicious animals, or vicious weather, I believe the Sheriff Department should be among the first to respond."

The Sheriff indicated that animal control officers can carry weapons and badges, and that due to the increased demands on his staff the animal calls have been placed below more urgent calls for service. "I cannot think of anything much more urgent than responding to an attack where someone has been severely wounded by an animal that was not properly under control and that animal is still loose. It is hard to believe such a call would come to 911, be routed to our two animal control officers, and only if a deputy is requested and available be sent to assist the situation. I would expect that the nearest available deputy be dispatched as a first responder to assess the situation of said animal until additional help can arrive", says Wallace, who faces the Sheriff in the Republican primary for Probate Judge. Wallace also asked why the Sheriff would think that two animal control officers would be able to respond more quickly than a deputy when a vicious animal call comes to 911. "Tuscaloosa County has more square miles than anywhere in Alabama. I have worked to assist the Sheriff in getting additional staff and preventing cutbacks that other counties experienced. It is inconceivable that 2 animal control officers could be expected to respond more quickly than deputies already on patrol in the county."

"We have worked with Sheriff Sexton every step of the way in his requests concerning this issue, including when he came to the Commission to say he would continue to respond to vicious animals as his responsibility and to request we take over general animal control calls. We then hired staff to handle routine animal calls. It was those individuals that responded to the recent attack in the Coker area, eventually located the animal and its owner, performing their duties as was reported in exemplary manner. I call upon the Sheriff to reconsider the tenor and the substance of his recent decision, so that citizens and families in Tuscaloosa County know that the Sheriff and his staff are fully committed to responding to the scene of a vicious animal attack in the interests of public safety."

For more info:  
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