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St. Landry sheriff calls on DA for more aggressive prosecution effort

Guidroz seeks more aggressive prosecution effort in St. Landry

By Richard Burgess rburgess@theadvocate.com **NOV 10, 2014 - 3:48 PM**

OPELOUSAS — The race for St. Landry Parish District Attorney ended Tuesday with the re-election of longtime incumbent Earl Taylor, but the campaign issues were still brewing Thursday at a news conference called by Sheriff Bobby Guidroz, who sided with Taylor's challenger.

Guidroz said he still believes voters want Taylor's office to come down harder on serious offenders — an issue Guidroz pushed while publicly campaigning for retired Judge Ellis Daigle in his unsuccessful bid to oust Taylor.

The sheriff's comments come after a fiery victory speech, posted on the KATC-TV website, in which Taylor called out Guidroz and told him "to run his own office."

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"Let me tell you this: I don't know why the sheriff chose to fight me, because I endorsed him last time," Taylor said when addressing campaign supporters Tuesday night. "But let me tell you this: I think this is a mandate to the sheriff that he ought to run his own office and leave the DA's Office alone."

Taylor easily won a fourth term, taking 59 percent of the vote after a heated campaign.

Guidroz said the 41 percent of voters, or 13,311 residents, who cast ballots against Taylor sent a message that a significant portion of the population wants to see changes in the way the District Attorney's Office operates.

"The message stated that when a criminal is properly arrested in St. Landry Parish and charged with a serious crime of drugs or violence, the prosecution of that criminal should be pursued just as judiciously as the arrest was," Guidroz said. "The old process of plea bargaining and other programs that end up allowing criminals to escape justice should be adjusted, replaced with a stronger, more aggressive prosecution effort."

Guidroz said he hopes to meet with Taylor soon to discuss how to move forward.

Taylor responded Thursday with a brief written statement.

“The campaign is over,” he wrote. “I’m at work, running my own office, and concentrating on strategies to address the challenges we face in our changing society. I urge the sheriff to put the election, with its false allegations and campaign rhetoric, behind him and to work with me to make our parish even safer for all hard-working, law-abiding citizens, no matter for whom they voted.”

Daigle had picked up the endorsements of Guidroz, Clerk of Court Charles Jagneaux and retired judges Frank McGee and Bobby Brinkman.

His campaign attacked Taylor relentlessly on allegations of being weak on crime and characterized the District Attorney’s Office’s pretrial diversion program as an opportunity for repeat offenders to buy a pass to avoid prosecution.

Taylor dismissed those accusations in his Tuesday night speech, telling supporters: “Throwing mud don’t make you DA. It just makes you dirty.”

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