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ALERT FEATURED TOP STORY

## Linn County sheriff election 2022: Jon Raymond wants change

Maddie Pfeifer

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Jon Raymond thinks he has a good chance of winning the Sheriff's race based on yard signs. Of the 700 signs he ordered, he says he has about a hundred.

Andy Cripe, Mid-Valley Media

Maddie Pfeifer

**E**ditor's note: This is the second of two Linn County sheriff candidate profiles. The profile of Sheriff Michelle Duncan ran Wednesday.

Jon Raymond wants to be a leader, not a manager. The deputy, 49, hopes a **successful run for Linn County sheriff** will result in big changes within the sheriff's office, where he's worked in for more than 20 years.

In those two decades, Raymond said he's seen a lot. And he's not happy with the direction the agency is heading.

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"I just kept thinking somebody's going to come along and fix this. Somebody else is going to do it," he said. "Then finally it hit me one day that I am the one. Somebody has to do it, and it's going to be me."

Raymond is running against incumbent Michelle Duncan, who ascended to the position via appointment. The two will face off in the county's **first contested General Election sheriff's race** in 26 years.



## Roots in Linn County

Raymond grew up in Linn County and his ties to LCSO trace back to when he was just 14. That's when he joined the agency's search and rescue team.

After high school, he joined the U.S. Coast Guard. He returned to Linn County after his military service and was hired by LCSO as a corrections officer in the jail in 1999.

Since then, he has logged around 2,422 training hours, according to Department of Public Safety Standards and Training records.

In 2005, the agency hired him as a deputy, and he's been in the role ever since. He said he hasn't sought promotions in the past because he wanted to directly impact the county.

"I wanted to serve the community. I wanted to be hands-on and be there," Raymond said. "I'm the guy that likes to answer the call. Moving into those administrative roles wasn't going to allow me to do that."

After some encouragement from friends, Raymond finally decided to run for office, to be in a position to make the changes he wants to see at his workplace.

Although Raymond doesn't have traditional leadership experience, he has spent decades directly interacting with citizens and learning their concerns. Being ingrained in the community should be a key part of sheriff's office operations, according to Raymond.

"The sheriff's job is to know what the citizens want and make sure the sheriff's office is providing those services to the best of their ability," he said. "That connection to the community has been lost a long time ago. We need to return to that connection in the community and get back into running the sheriff's office that way."

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## Two names on the ballot

Raymond is looking forward to giving voters in Linn County a choice in sheriff. He believes the current pattern of a sheriff retiring early and the undersheriff taking over is problematic.

“I think they have manipulated a loophole in the system,” Raymond said. “The sheriff is an elected position, and it should be elected every time. There should not be a handoff.”

Duncan has been endorsed by the five previous sheriffs. Raymond interprets this as proof there exists a “good old boys club” in which people are rewarded not on merit but for who they know.

Raymond may not have the support of previous sheriffs, but he has been backed by the Linn County Deputy Sheriff’s Association, which represents the rank-and-file deputies.

“I think it shows that the establishment is exactly the problem that we’re fighting,” he said. “Five sheriffs who haven’t shown their faces in our office in years now think they know who the best candidate for sheriff is.”

Raymond is running for office with Deputy Travis Boshart as his intended undersheriff. Raymond said he has no intention of retiring early and handing off the job to Boshart should he assume the position. He added that Boshart is aware of this.

Boshart is the cousin of state Rep. Shelly Boshart Davis. Raymond said he wants the community to know his campaign is not solely funded by “Boshart money.”

## Making changes

Should Raymond be elected in November, there are plenty of goals he hopes to accomplish. One of the key phrases of his campaign has been holding criminals accountable. He also wants to open the jail to full capacity.

Raymond vows to get rid of the “red tape” in the sheriff’s office and put more deputies on the streets instead of filling out paperwork. He said he has seen multiple deputies leave the agency because they weren’t happy with leadership and the culture of the sheriff’s office.

“There is a mindset in the sheriff’s office right now that you have to wait for the sheriff to do anything. You have to wait for approval, and I need to change that mindset,” Raymond said. “The experts in their field need to make decisions in their field. ... We don’t need the sheriff to micromanage.”

One of his goals is to focus on retention within the agency; better to keep the deputies than have to continually replace them.

If he becomes the county’s top cop, Raymond intends on leaning on the strengths of his employees. He said his job as a leader is to put together the best team he can.

He criticized the current leadership style as not effective. He said he doesn’t see Duncan as a leader but as a manager.

“I feel like we need a crime-fighting sheriff, not a business and office manager,” he said.

## **Community support**

Facing off against an incumbent can be daunting, but Raymond said he feels pretty confident about his chances come November.

If he does lose, he hopes he can keep his job as a mountain patrol deputy. He loves the work, which is part of the reason he hasn’t made a run for sheriff until now.

He said if the demand for "Jon Raymond for Sheriff" yard signs is any indication, he has a lot of support.

“I know that people think the sheriff’s election is important, and they are listening,” Raymond said. “They’re looking, they’re watching. Everyday someone has donated to my campaign. Everyday somebody’s contacted me about support. It makes me feel very well.”

Raymond said the community support along with endorsements from current deputies means a lot to him and his campaign.

“It’s humbling. I know how important this is,” he said. “I know how important it is to the guys, but I also feel like I’m just doing what I should be doing.”

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**By Maddie Pfeifer**

**Reporter**

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