

Watchmen Voter Guide for Kootenai County Coroner

** Click on each candidate's name to see their completed questionnaire **

	Dr. Duke Johnson	Dr. Mark E. Manteuffel
1. What is your name, what office are you running for and why are you running for this position?	Dr. Duke Johnson. M.D. – I’m running for the office of Kootenai County Coroner Purpose – Normally, this office isn’t viewed as critical to our health. However, in the last two years, accurate, reliable medical information becomes critical for protecting lives. As will be explained in Question #13 in greater detail, I have extensive experience in researching and providing accurate verifiable advice to people during pandemics. I desire to bring this experience into this office to protect the citizens of Kootenai County.	I have spent 26 years caring for the people of North Idaho as an ER Physician, and the coroner’s job is a natural progression of my 30 years of experience with all forms of disease and injury. I look forward to continuing to serve the people of Kootenai County with integrity and diligence. My goal is to give families confidence that the cause of death is determined accurately so that they can reach closure. I want to ensure that any criminal activity is found.
2. Our county is growing very rapidly, in your opinion has enough infrastructure been allocated to the coroner’s office and what are your suggestions?	Yes, the infrastructure has been adequately allocated allowing for growth. All autopsies from Kootenai County are performed in Spokane and they have recently completed and expansion of their facilities. There is no reason for Kootenai County to duplicate these efforts. As the county population grows, the need for increased offices will most likely be necessary and the current facility already allows for such expansion without significant expenditures.	The facility and staffing of the office is good. The current Coroner, Dr. Keene, and the Deputy Coroners have done an excellent job of staying in the allotted budget. That said, the tremendous population growth that we have all experienced, as well as the increased number of opioid overdoses and violence will ultimately require some increased resources for the office to do its work.
3. Do you support or oppose requirements for developers to pay for community infrastructure?	I support requirements for developers to pay for community infrastructure because our current citizens shouldn’t be burdened with such costs. This can be achieved if properly constructed through legal impact fees.	There needs to be at least a significant cost sharing, particularly with high-density developments.
4. In your opinion, what is the role of the Coroner in regards to working together with the Sheriff’s department?	The Coroner needs to and currently does work very closely with the Sheriff’s department both on scene and behind the scenes. The deputy coroners have an outstanding reputation with local law enforcement which I will continue to foster. Both departments have a common goal of arriving at the truth as to the source of death in any incident in order to protect the citizens of Kootenai County from further harm.	I will emphasize a team approach, working together with law enforcement and EMS as well as other involved entities. The ability to collaborate in death investigations and share information and insights is critical to reaching accurate conclusions as to cause of death and if a crime may have been committed.

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5. Are there checks and balances that the Coroner provides in respect to other elected officials?	Yes, all elected officials must work in unison and prepare in advance for any possibility of mass death incidents. It's contingent upon all departments to work in unison and cohesively in order to best prepare the response in case such an incident were to occur.	As we have seen with the recent mandates and tremendous overreaches of power by elected officials around the country, our founders in Idaho were wise to set up a balance of power. Per Idaho Statute, if the court issues an arrest warrant, the coroner is the designated official authorized to supervise the arrest and transport of the sheriff to facility other than their own. For this reason, the Coroner is an elected position, and not an appointed one. Elections make officials directly accountable to the people they are supposed to be serving.
6. In your opinion, as an elected official, who do you see yourself accountable to and why?	I see myself as accountable to the people of Kootenai County thus the reason for this office being determined through the vote of the electorate. Elected officials are rightly to be held accountable to the citizens and perform in a manner that best suits their needs.	My allegiance and accountability as coroner is solely to the people of Kootenai County. Running for the position of coroner is not a political steppingstone for me. I am not beholden to any committee.
7. Do you support or oppose the idea of a county manager? Why or why not?	I oppose the idea of county manager. Almost without fail, adding increased layers of bureaucracy to government in the past has decreased efficiency, decreased accountability to the electorate and added unnecessary costs which increased the financial burden on citizens.	I oppose the concept of a county manager, as it eliminates direct accountability to the voters. We have seen misuse of power exemplified in other appointed managerial situations. Rather than directly serve the desires of the broad electorate, they become tools of the few who appointed them. In my experience, an appointed county manager leaves little to no recourse available for the voters who may be negatively impacted by the manager's actions.
8. Do you believe the ARPA funds come with Federal requirements that might conflict with Idaho values? Why or why not? How will you advocate for the funds to be used locally?	Though several respectable people have thoroughly researched ARPA funds and report that any ties the federal government may try to impose on the ARPA money can be resisted, my current understanding is that federal money seemingly always has strings and subsequently conflict with Idaho values. To answer the final question in this section, assumption must be made that there are no strings and if that were possible, then the funds would best be used to expand the jail and court rooms.	The ARPA funds came from our federal taxes, so not accessing some of it may be unwise. Rather than being swayed by talking points, we need to investigate legally the available options and potential obligations acquired by accepting said funds. We, of course, must maintain our freedom and never compromise our moral values for a few dollars. For example, the coroner's office has requested some money for a cold storage morgue trailer for use in the event of a mass fatality. My understanding is that the only restriction was that the funds be used for that specific purpose. Other departments will need to apply diligence to investigate the pros and cons of accepting the funds.

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9. How would you utilize the budget that you manage while being fiscally responsible?	Expenditures will be limited to proper and smooth functioning of the coroner's office working in sync with the Sheriff's office staff. Fiscal responsibility involves spending carefully and as the need arises rather than viewing the funds as unlimited. Policies should always be focused on maintaining the budget allowed.	I have been informed of the budget amount and that Dr. Keene has stayed within it. I am not, as a candidate, privy to the details of the finances of the office. I am, however, committed to fiscal responsibility and good stewardship of resources, both human and financial.
10. With the rapid growth of the county, do you think we need more commissioners?	No. Ada County, which is larger than Kootenai County, functions adequately with three and so should Kootenai County.	No. I believe adding more commissioners would result in less personal accountability to the voters and reduced comprehensive knowledge of the issues at hand by each commissioner.
11. Do you believe the six Row Officers (assessor, sheriff, prosecuting attorney, treasurer, coroner, and clerk) should be appointed or stay elected? Why or why not?	The six Row Officers should stay elected maintaining the power within the hands of the citizens rather than with an appointed manager who doesn't have to answer to the electorate.	Elected officials should have no question of whom they are working for. Appointed officials are working for whoever appointed them.
12. In recent years some groups have advocated for legalizing marijuana in our state, do you support or oppose the legalization of marijuana? Why or why not?	I oppose legalization of marijuana. Marijuana deleteriously impacts several levels of cognition (the ability to think with reason and perception). This negatively impacts the safety of all citizens of Kootenai County on our roads, at work and economically through reduced production and increased healthcare costs with associated complications.	I oppose it. I have yet to see any good come from its use.

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<p>13. What is your background and why do you believe it qualifies you for this position?</p>	<p>Upon graduating from UCLA’s School of Medicine I began my medical career as an emergency physician at a very large trauma center in Southern California where I cared for thousands of patients who were trauma victims which will aid in my ability to assess unattended deaths and mass deaths which may occur as a coroner. After this portion of my career, I moved into preventative medicine and becoming medical director for the largest supplement manufacturer in the world holding a position with them for 14 years traveling to 30 different countries instructing customers on preventive medicine. The company had millions of distributors globally of their products and in the role of medical director, there were several pandemics which broke out globally affecting our customers and affiliates, including SARS1. The affiliates and distributors sought our health advice during pandemics and I’m well versed to provide similar insights based upon extensive experience to protect the people of Kootenai County if called upon to do so in the future. There are few physicians with such experience and I would be honored to provide it to our citizens in order to help protect them in the future with clarity.</p>	<p>I was a commissioned officer in the USAF Medical Corps, as a Flight Surgeon. I am Board certified in Family Medicine and have 30 years of Emergency Medical practice experience. I have been on medical missions to Nepal, Haiti, and Bolivia. I have accumulated a broad range of knowledge and skills that will allow me to understand the disease or mechanism of injury that caused a death. I have worked collaboratively every day of my career with Emergency Medical Services, law enforcement, and all other medical professional to find answers. These skills are critical to the coroner’s role and are second nature to me.</p>