



May 21, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DAVIS TO CHALLENGE GOP PRIMARY ELECTION FOR KNOX
SHERIFF AS SEVERELY TAINTED; SEEKS RULING FROM
STATE GOP VOIDING ELECTION AND SETTING RERUN**

Mike Davis, Republican candidate for Sheriff of Knox County in the May 5, 2026 County Primary Election, announced today that he will contest the Republican Primary for the office of Sheriff under state law.

Davis and his attorney, Lance K. Baker, appeared earlier today before the Knox County Election Commission to inform Commissioners about Davis's plans. Baker stated, "the Republican Primary for Sheriff was severely tainted and the election's basic integrity was undermined. This needs to be remedied by a rerun of the primary election for Sheriff."

Baker specifically pointed to former Sheriff candidates David Amburn and JJ Jones, who were indicted by the State just days after the election.

Amburn and Jones received 18,567 votes – 41.66% of all lawful ballots cast – for Sheriff. Davis received 6,330 votes, or 14.20%. Brent Gibson received 19,672 votes, or 44.14%. "A substantial number of voters would likely have voted differently had they received the critical information about the investigations and indictments," Baker said.

The state and federal joint investigation began in 2019. In 2022, Chief of the KCSO Narcotics Unit, David Henderson, was the first Sheriff's employee to be indicted during the investigation, and pled guilty in August 2025. By November 2025, the State had presented its findings to DA Charmé Allen, who recused herself, after which a DA pro tem, Stephen D. Crump, was appointed to prosecute.

In February 2026, Amburn and Jones filed their qualifying petitions in order to be placed on the ballot. Election day was May 5, with Gibson receiving a plurality of the vote. Then, eight days later, the Knox County Grand Jury returned indictments against Amburn, Jones and nine others for three counts of felony theft.

According to Baker, “when nearly half of the electorate cast votes for candidates who are revealed to be under indictment, public confidence in the process is understandably shaken.

In *Forbes v. Bell*, 816 S.W.2d 716 (Tenn. 1991), the Tennessee Supreme Court recognized that an election may be set aside where fraud, illegality, or irregularity so permeates the election process that the true outcome becomes “incurably uncertain,” even where individual ballots themselves are lawful.

Significantly, Davis's contest does not allege that Republican voters acted unlawfully in casting their ballots. Rather, it asserts that the electorate was deprived of material information directly bearing upon the integrity, qualifications, and fitness of the candidates seeking the office of Sheriff, an office requiring the highest degree of public trust and statutory qualification under Tennessee law.

Davis stated, “what happened on May 5 was grossly unfair to Knox County voters. I believe the State Republican Party should have a great interest in setting things right for Knox County citizens and that's exactly what we're going to request them to do.”

Baker insists that “the Republican Primary for the office of Knox County Sheriff should be voided. Otherwise, the 2026 county primary election will, for the foreseeable future, be contaminated in the minds of

countless voters who understandably consider their solemn votes as having been effectively compromised by what turned out to be a sham election.”

Citing Tennessee election law, Baker stated, “an election contest must be made by written notice within five calendar days of certification.” The contest would be initially reviewed by the State Republican Party Chair, and absent dismissal, by the Republican State Executive Committee sitting as the State Primary Board.