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D.C. Mayoral Candidate, Robert White's, Criminal Justice Platform



Laura Waxman, Director of Public Safety at the U.S. Conference of Mayors discusses legislative policing recommendations for mayors- video link on Blackboard.

WASHINGTON - Citizens of Ward 7 have felt the first hand effects of Washington D.C.'s growing crime rates. With one of the highest homicide rates in the city, citizens are looking for a comprehensive response to cycles of violence felt throughout the ward.

Since announcing his plan to run for mayor of Washington on Oct. 31, Council Member Robert White has met with Advisory Neighborhood Commissions throughout the city to address concerns on the city's jail conditions, gun violence and record high [homicide rate](#).

“Since working with Councilmember White, we’ve been able to see several small yet incremental changes in the Neighborhood Advisory Commission,” said Delia Housel, member of ANC 7E. “We still have a lot of work to be done, but we’ve been grateful to work with him so far.”

[White's](#) platform aims to address systemic inequities through violence prevention in a city White said is, "plagued with seemingly endless violent crime and systemic poverty."

Violence and Policing

White said in an email interview that in Washington's low income communities, "violence feels like the only option," where stable jobs, affordable housing, a good education and mental health resources are less accessible to the city's predominately Black wards.

"We need to treat violence in our city as the health crisis that it is and take a public health approach to addressing it," said White. "Crime is a learned behavior, not a natural instinct, and it spreads like a disease when we don't interrupt it."

The key to reducing Washington's crime rate, according to White, is to build community trust with the Metropolitan Police Department, lessen police officers' non-public safety responsibilities and invest in communities to prevent crime.

During his interview, White highlighted that many of Washington's residents feel "abandoned" by the city's law enforcement. But a lack of community dependence and trust with the MPD for violent crimes leads to a higher rate of unsolved crime and further distrust in the police, according to White.

Once elected, mayors have the authority to instate a police chief for the city and can also fire a police chief “with or without [cause](#)” in Washington.

“Mayors and chiefs work very much in partnership. Most mayors would say choosing a police chief is the most important appointment they can make,” said Laura Waxman, director of public safety at the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Jail Conditions and Incarceration

Inmates and city activists have criticized the conditions of Washington’s predominately Black jail for decades. However, jail conditions have recently come to the attention of lawmakers and government officials due to [complaints filed](#) by predominately white insurrectionists arrested at the U.S. Capitol riot on Jan. 6.

In 2006, White’s brother, Michael White, was incarcerated in Washington for two years after fleeing a hit and run while drunk driving. Throughout his brother’s incarceration, White would visit Washington’s jail seeing conditions he stated were both “inhumane” and “unacceptable.”

“We need to focus on rehabilitating the people in our custody by giving them the resources to be more productive members of our community,” said White. “If we foster positive relationships with incarcerated residents, not only will we be doing the humane thing, but we will be sending community members who trust and feel they can depend on the government back into neighborhoods.”

Past Work As D.C. Councilmember

Throughout his two terms as a member of the D.C. Council, White has worked on legislation focusing on education, criminal justice reform, economic development and voting rights since being elected in 2016.

Many of the acts backed or authored by White have focused on crime reduction from policies that provide grants to underfunded [schools](#) to establishing “[transition plans](#)” for previously incarcerated Washington residents.

During the last re-election for D.C. Council, White received the top votes out of any candidate in all of Washington’s eight wards.

White will be running against current D.C. Mayor, Muriel Bowser who is running for her third term. The councilmember will also face many democratic candidates including Councilmember Trayon White (D-Ward 8), James Butler, former commissioner of Ward 5 ANC and Michael Campbell.