

LLOYD FRANKLIN JR.

1. 2023 saw an almost total meltdown of the Quorum Court operation and much of county government. What could you do (or what did you do) as JP to improve the situation? I must respectfully denounce the mischaracterization of the democratic process. It is disheartening to witness the distortion of facts, especially regarding the delicate balance of power among the branches of our government. As a Justice of the Peace and a dedicated member of the legislative body for Jefferson County Government, I have diligently sought to uphold the principles of our democratic system. The challenges faced by the Quorum Court in 2023 were not a result of internal breakdowns but rather a reflection of the fundamental importance of preserving the separation of powers.

The suggested "meltdown" stemmed from the Executive branch's overreach, particularly by the County Judge, who infringed upon the constitutional rights and duties of the legislative branch. It is essential to recognize that no single branch possesses unchecked authority, and each must operate within its prescribed limits. Throughout this tumultuous period, I sought legal counsel, including guidance from the county prosecutor, to ensure an unbiased interpretation of the separation of powers doctrine. Despite clear legal advice affirming the authority of the Quorum Court, the County Judge chose to disregard counsel and pursue a path of unilateral control. I made numerous attempts, both through oral arguments and written communication, to direct the County Judge to the pertinent laws supporting the position of the Quorum Court.



Regrettably, these efforts were met with indifference and a refusal to acknowledge the established legal framework. In light of these challenges, it is imperative that we reaffirm our commitment to the principles of democracy and the rule of law. Upholding the integrity of our governmental institutions requires vigilance and a steadfast dedication to ensuring accountability and transparency at every level.

2. What are two goals you would have as a JP in the next term and how would you pay for them if financing is required? The opportunity to share my vision for the upcoming term as a Justice of the Peace is vital. In addressing the pressing issues facing our legislative body, the Quorum Court, I believe that fostering a greater adherence to the principles of the separation of powers doctrine, as outlined in the Arkansas Constitution, is paramount. Here are two goals I would pursue and how we can fund them if necessary.

Education and Advocacy: One of the primary goals would be to enhance education and advocacy efforts regarding the separation of powers doctrine. Many may not fully understand the importance of this constitutional principle or its implications for our local governance.

By organizing seminars, workshops, and informational sessions, we can empower both our constituents and fellow officials with the knowledge needed to uphold the integrity of our governmental structure. Funding for such initiatives could be sought through partnerships with educational institutions, community organizations, and grants earmarked for civic education programs.

Mediation and Conflict Resolution: Another crucial objective would involve implementing effective mediation and conflict resolution mechanisms to address disputes arising from breaches of the separation of powers. When disagreements occur between the Quorum Court and the County Judge, it's essential to have structured processes in place for resolving conflicts amicably and in accordance with legal principles. Investing in professional mediation services and training for officials in conflict resolution techniques could be financed through budget allocations specifically designated for improving inter-branch relations and promoting governmental efficiency.

In achieving these goals, collaboration and cooperation among all stakeholders will be key. It's imperative that we transcend partisan divides and prioritize the collective interests of our community. By fostering an environment of mutual respect, open dialogue, and a shared commitment to the principles of democratic governance, we can ensure that the business of the people is conducted effectively and without discord.

3. What are some of the key issues associated with your district and how would you address them?
Through conversations with constituents, it's evident that one of the primary concerns is the need for greater transparency in county government, coupled with accountability for public funds. Additionally, many residents have expressed a desire for a county judge who respects the separation of powers doctrine between the legislative (quorum court) and executive (county judge) branches of government.

Democracy thrives on transparency, accountability, and the effective functioning of its branches. As your elected Justice of the Peace, I am committed to addressing these concerns in several ways:

Transparency Initiatives: Implementing measures to enhance transparency within the county government, such as regular public updates on budget allocations, expenditures, and decision-making processes. This could involve hosting town hall meetings and maintaining an accessible online portal for residents to track county finances.

Accountability Measures: Advocate for policies and procedures that promote accountability for the use of public funds. This includes more rigorous oversight of county expenditures, and adherence to budgetary guidelines to ensure fiscal responsibility and integrity.

Respecting Separation of Powers: As a Justice of the Peace, I will continue to uphold the principles of the separation of powers doctrine by collaborating with fellow members of the quorum court to exercise legislative authority responsibly. It is essential to maintain a healthy balance of power between the legislative and executive branches, ensuring that each operates within its designated scope of authority.

Engagement and Outreach: Facilitating open channels of communication between county officials and constituents is crucial for fostering trust and promoting civic engagement. I will continue to actively engage citizens and elected officials to ensure that their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed.

By prioritizing transparency, accountability, and the principles of democratic governance, I am dedicated to serving the best interests of Jefferson County Quorum Court District 5 and its residents.

4. We have heard complaints from county residents about the condition of the roads. Is the county doing enough to keep them in good shape? And what can a JP do to improve them? Insufficient attention is directed towards county roads, and county courthouse parking lots including simple striping to identify regular and handicap parking designations necessitating clarification of responsibilities outlined in Arkansas Code Annotated A.C.A. § 14-14-502(b)(1)-(3) governing county government divisions. The Quorum Court and the County Judge possess distinct roles in planning and constructing public roads. A.C.A. § 14-14-502(b)(1)-(3) delineates the divisions and separate powers of county government: legislative (quorum court), executive (county judge), and judicial (county court). Regarding funding for road maintenance, the Quorum Court has diligently fulfilled its constitutional duties. Under County Judge Gerald Robinson's Administration, appropriations totaling \$29,492,368.70 exceeded those of the three preceding County Judges by an annual average of \$5,898,473.74. Unfortunately, mismanagement by Judge Robinson depleted the County Road Emergency Reserve Fund, necessitating unprecedented supplemental appropriations from alternative funds, exceeding \$1,000,000.00, not traditionally allocated for road projects. Judge Robinson's allocation of taxpayer dollars to vendors and contractors in exchange for campaign contributions is evident in his campaign financial report. Perhaps campaign donors are more of a priority for Judge Robinson or Justices like Danny Holcomb who has been a benefactor of a brand-new road improvements completed to the road his personal residence is located. Although the Quorum Court may pass ordinances regarding roads or road plans, it lacks authority to restrict the County Judge's jurisdiction over county roads. Establishing a county planning board, as authorized by A.C.A. § 14-17-203, could improve roads by drafting an official road plan and holding town hall meetings to gather public input on road conditions. Presently, such input is restricted by the County Judge's control over the agenda during full Quorum Court meetings.

In conclusion, while the Quorum Court respects the County Judge's authority over county roads, it remains committed to fostering constructive dialogue and exploring avenues for improvement.

5. One of the jobs of the Quorum Court is to levy the various millages in the county. This year, because of the dysfunction previously mentioned, the levying of taxes went down to the wire and was approved at the last minute, putting at risk all of these millages and the operations those tax dollars fund. School superintendents and mayors became highly concerned because the inaction of the Quorum Court would have had catastrophic consequences for their operations. Can you say how you reacted during this period as a JP and why OR say how you would have reacted as a JP during this period? In response to the assertion that the levying of taxes by the Quorum Court went down to the wire and was approved at the last minute. I must strongly reject this notion as it does not accurately represent the proceedings and commitment of the Quorum Court members. Contrary to the suggestion of disinterest, the majority of Quorum Court members took their responsibilities seriously. It is regrettable that the local media failed to report that the Quorum Court, by the majority, convened on November 20, 2023, in the absence of the County Judge, to levy tax rates for 2023 as mandated by A.C.A. § 14-14-904. Following this, County Judge Robinson exercised his authority to veto those items, as allowed by A.C.A. § 14-14-911(a). However, the Quorum Court, adhering to the provisions of the Arkansas Constitution, Amendment 55, § 4, duly exercised its power to override the veto. Therefore, it was clear at that time that the issue had passed. The subsequent meeting held on December 20, 2023, was merely to reiterate the levy of ad valorem tax rates, prompted by County Judge Robinson's attempt to portray the issue as unresolved. His actions were aimed at adding other items to the agenda that had previously been rejected by the majority of justices. It is essential to understand that the Quorum Court members remain steadfast in their commitment to the advancement of Jefferson County, despite any disagreements with other branches of government."

As a Justice of the Peace, I stand firm in affirming that the Quorum Court acted diligently and responsibly throughout this process, ensuring that the essential operations funded by these tax dollars were not put at risk. It is imperative to set the record straight regarding the timeline and actions taken by the Quorum Court members.

6. Anything else you want to say? I am seeking reelection for the same purpose that drove me to run for this office during the previous term: at the behest of countywide elected officials who have faced mistreatment and insufficient funding. Upon assuming office, I set forth two primary objectives: establishing a fair and transparent budgeting procedure and providing an open and transparent agenda accessible to all elected officials. I have successfully achieved these goals and remain committed to upholding accountability, fairness, and transparency within county government moving forward. While it may not be widely acknowledged, Jefferson County is currently facing a critical juncture. The county is entangled in numerous lawsuits due to the practices and commitments of Judge Gerald Robinson's administration in conducting business which includes support from compromised Justices of the Peace who blindly support this behavior. These issues range from illegal contracts, the absence of competitive bidding processes for sums of millions of taxpayers' money to instances of outright theft of funds and property from the county, as identified by the Arkansas Legislative Audit Report (2020, 2021). Lawsuits settled in secrecy and/or under the cover of darkness, thieves, conspirators and co-conspirators allowed to leave the employment of the county unpunished are examples of the current standard. Kickbacks and corruption run afoul in Jefferson County. All individuals who defraud the county must be held accountable to the fullest extent, including prosecution. Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely (Lord Acton). I pledge to exhaust all available resources at my disposal to pursue individuals who misuse, abuse, or misappropriate public funds and/or property.

I hail from a family of public servants, equipped with a business-oriented mindset, backed by over 20 years of experience, coupled with 8 years of service as a Justice of the Peace. I know the policies, I know the law, I know the job

JIMMY FISHER SR.

- 1. 2023 saw an almost total meltdown of the Quorum Court operation and much of county government. What could you do (or what did you do) as JP to improve the situation? I would have reminded my colleagues why we were elected by the people and what our responsibilities are in the County Government. Also, let it be known that yes we are the legislative body of the County but it doesn't operate independently of itself but works in lockstep with one another and the Judge.**
- 2. What are two goals you would have as a JP in the next term and how would you pay for them if financing is required? My first goal would be to finish the road work that has been neglected to restore the confidence in the people of this County. My second goal would be to build back the working relationship with my fellow colleagues so we all can work hand and hand with the Judge on new ideas that will move this County forward.**
- 3. What are some of the key issues associated with your district and how would you address them? One issue I see is that some of the public is not knowledgeable of how the County Government differs from the City Government. We must find a way to educate all of the different.**
- 4. We have heard complaints from county residents about the condition of the roads. Is the county doing enough to keep them in good shape? And what can a JP do to improve them? As I stated in my answer to question # 2 still holds fast. During my last term as JP District # 5, there were records settings of resurfacing of roads.**



We must pick up where we left off and finish what we started.

- 5. One of the jobs of the Quorum Court is to levy the various millages in the county. This year, because of the dysfunction previously mentioned, the levying of taxes went down to the wire and was approved at the last minute, putting at risk all of these millages and the operations those tax dollars fund. School superintendents and mayors became highly concerned because the inaction of the Quorum Court would have had catastrophic consequences for their operations. Can you say how you reacted during this period as a JP and why OR say how you would have reacted as a JP during this period? My reaction to the Quorum Court taking a stand of such nature was very dangerous. Without levying taxes, many entities come to a stop.**
- 6. Anything else you want to say? As a Quorum Court member known as Justice of the Peace must know what our responsibilities are. Where they begin and where they end.**