



MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Paul Shumaker, Jim O'Neill for DA
SUBJECT: Campaign Update
DATE: September 22, 2026

In November 2022, Jim O'Neill defeated his Democratic opponent by just over 2% to win the Forsyth County political seat, while outpacing all other countywide Republican candidates by 5 to 8 percentage points.

Now, 2026 poses a new set of challenges for Jim O'Neill in his reelection.

Challenge number one: Joe Biden is no longer in the White House. Republicans control all branches of the federal government, and a Republican midterm election will impact voter turnout. To date, given the non-competitive nature of the US Senate contest, O'Neill and other Forsyth County Republicans must ensure base GOP turnout.

Challenge Number Two: President Trump's approval numbers are at a historic low with registered Unaffiliated voters. His approval rating is directly related to the economy and the rising cost of energy and groceries.

Fortunately, there is a clear path for O'Neill. A path that allows Jim to build a winning coalition with Unaffiliated voters and crossover Democratic voters who care about crime and keeping local communities safe.

O'Neill offers a long, documented record of over 30 years of prosecuting serious crimes and managing the office responsible for those prosecutions. Hunter will try to claim that her experiences on both sides of the justice system have been highly beneficial. Still, the relevant question is whether Hunter has demonstrated the prosecutorial and management experience necessary to operate the office from her first day.

And the answer is No.

The Jaxson Swain matter

Two-year-old Jaxson Swain died in August 2015 after suffering extensive blunt-force injuries and human bite marks. Charles Thomas Stacks was charged with the murder.

The principal prosecutor publicly identified in the sentencing coverage was Jennifer Martin, then chief assistant district attorney. Amara Hunter was assigned to assist. Martin called it one of the most gruesome and heartless murders she had encountered in her 20-year career.

Shockingly, during the trial, Hunter had to be removed from the prosecution following a poor courtroom performance.



Shortly afterward, Hunter joined the criminal defense ranks and now represents the very people Jim O'Neill and our local law enforcement officers are trying to remove from the streets.

I've attached a PDF list of approximately 25 current or recent matters associated with Hunter, including allegations involving:

- Child abuse and elder abuse.
- Heroin, methamphetamine, and opioid trafficking.
- Kidnapping and sexual assault.
- Firearms and machine-gun offenses.
- Assaults involving serious injury or intent to kill.
- Sexual exploitation of a minor.
- Habitual impaired driving and felony death by vehicle.

Hunter's Attacks on O'Neill ring hollow.

Crime statistics do not support Hunter's claim that crime has continually increased under O'Neill. Winston-Salem Police Department figures for January through July 2024 showed:

- Violent crime is down 17.2% from the comparable period in 2023.
- Homicide down 48.5%.
- Robbery down 21.4%.
- Aggravated assault is down 17.5%.
- Property crime down 13.0%.

Cross-party law-enforcement support

An endorsement from Democratic Sheriff Bobby Kimbrough would be politically noteworthy because it could support three factual inferences:

- O'Neill has maintained an effective working relationship with the county's chief elected law-enforcement official.
- The endorsement crosses party lines.
- A law-enforcement official who regularly works with the DA's office is supporting the incumbent based on direct institutional experience.

Then the bottom line

Jim O'Neill cannot win on his record alone. The political winds are blowing in the face of Republicans, and he must make the case that a change in the office of District Attorney, given his opponents' lack of



experience, runs the risk of reversing the current downward trend in crime statistics. A long-serving district attorney with extensive prosecutorial, managerial, electoral, and law-enforcement experience versus a challenger who sides with the criminal element and failed young Jaxon Swain.
