

# 2026 Hamilton County Democrat Primary Election

# Voter Guide

501(c)(3) - compliant  
and nonpartisan

## County Mayor

County Primary Election | 5/5/2026



**YOUR VOTE  
MATTERS**

**5/5/2026**

Online Voter Registration/Record Updating available until 4/6/2026 at: <https://sos.tn.gov/elections>

Contact Church Voter Guides at: [Info@VoteChattanooga.org](mailto:Info@VoteChattanooga.org) | Updated 4/6/2026

For other Voter Guides and more information, please go to our website: [www.VoteChattanooga.org](http://www.VoteChattanooga.org)

Church Voter Guides does not endorse or oppose any candidates for public office or any political party.

The Voter Guide Information contained in this document is provided for informational purposes only. It was obtained directly from candidates and other sources, and we have done our best to convey it to you accurately, but nothing herein has been "fact checked". Utilize this Voter Guide at your own discretion. We take no responsibility for the factual nature of the content, or for publishing errors, etc. To the best of our knowledge, this Voter Guide is 501(c) (3) – and officially nonpartisan, and thereby it does not support or oppose any candidate.

# Hamilton County 2026 Democrat Primary Election Voter Guide for County Mayor

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to the Voter Guide	2
County Mayor	4
Mark Herndon	7
Voter Guide Sponsors & Partners	12

Independent Survey by





## Introduction to the Voter Guide

*Church Voter Guides* is an independent 501(c)(3) faith-based nonprofit organization. We serve the public by providing objective research and education on matters specifically of interest to Christians, primarily through the production and distribution of 501 (c)(3)-compliant, nonpartisan voter guides.

*Church Voter Guides* does not endorse or oppose any candidates for public office or any political party.

Church Voter Guides, a Chattanooga nonprofit, initially started in Colorado Springs in April of 2021. This new Voter Guide for the 2026 Democrat Primary is being distributed electronically only, both through our interactive website and by downloadable and printable PDF files. We have produced one Voter Guide for each seat that is: (1) conducting an election this year, and (2) for which at least one candidate in that election answered our Questionnaire. Our Voter Guides are being promoted through a wide-ranging network of area churches, faith-based non-profit organizations, mainstream and social media, and other means.

The purpose of our Voter Guides is to educate and inform voters of each candidate's positions on a variety of policy issues that they are likely to address if elected. As a Voter Guide designed to be distributed through Churches, we ask the candidates questions on topics that are of utmost interest to the Christian voter

### How to Get the Most Benefit from this Voter Guide

The core information in this Voter Guide comes directly from the County Primary Elections candidates themselves. We asked them questions, they answered (with a 120 word limit), and we have published their responses here. In order to understand and utilize this information to the fullest, so that you may vote in the most informed way, we suggest the following:

1. Pray and ask the Almighty for discernment. The Kingdom of God is all about truth, while politics is a system fraught with compromise. Make sure you consider the candidates' answers with a Heavenly mindset.
2. Ask yourself, "Did the candidate actually answer the question, or rather side-step it, or give a fluff, wishy-washy, and/or 'political' type answer that leaves you not really knowing where he/she truly stands on the issue?"
3. Learn more about the candidates running for County Mayor including their positions on issues we did not cover in our questionnaire, by visiting their official campaign websites (if they have one.) The website URL for each candidate is listed in the Voter Guide.
4. Educate yourself more about the Christian/Biblical perspective regarding many of the subjects covered in our Voter Guide by reading topical articles on our website: [www.VoteChattanooga.org](http://www.VoteChattanooga.org)
5. Use search engines to find additional information about each candidate, including written articles and videos, other voter guides, and even voting records for those who have served in public office before. You may even want to watch online recordings of the local County Mayor meetings to see how incumbents conduct themselves and vote.
6. Reach out to the candidates themselves through the provided email addresses and other means, in order to ask them questions of personal importance to you. Please make sure to show great respect toward each candidate and his/her time, especially to those with whom you disagree. Running for office is hard, stressful, time consuming work, and these are your fellow citizens who have lives, families, jobs...and feelings (just like you!)

Independent Survey by



## What makes a Voter Guide 501 (c)(3) - Compliant and Nonpartisan?

Federal tax law permits nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations to develop and distribute materials about political candidates' positions on issues, in order to educate voters impartially and on a nonpartisan basis; meaning that it is free from party affiliation, bias, or designation. The IRS states that 501 (c)(3) organizations may conduct any range of activities to promote voter participation and educate voters so long as it is nonpartisan. But, 501(c)(3) organizations are explicitly prohibited from supporting or opposing candidates for public office.

Some of the activities 501(c)(3) nonprofits *MAY* perform: Conduct or promote voter registration; educate voters on the voting process; distribute nonpartisan sample ballots, candidate questionnaires, and **voter guides**; organize "get-out-the-vote" activities; encourage and help people to vote; educate the candidates on issues important to their organization; and continue to do issue advocacy during an election.

So, first and foremost: **Church Voter Guides** does **NOT** endorse or oppose any candidates for public office or any political party.

Second, all of our staff and volunteers are required to act in a nonpartisan manner when working for or representing the organization and the creation of the Voter Guide.

Third, we do not edit, revise, or editorialize candidate responses to our Questionnaire. We do not even correct typos. **Candidate answers are published verbatim**, ensuring that their responses accurately represent their positions and perspectives on these issues. We then simply share this information through the Voter Guide, and you decide whom you believe to be the best candidate.

To be fair and impartial, we reached out by email, text, and phone when determined necessary, to all registered candidates running for County Mayor throughout Hamilton County for their 2026 elections, inviting them to answer our questionnaire. Candidate information is presented in alphabetical order by **last name**. If a Candidate did not respond at all, or did not choose to participate, or did not choose to respond to certain answers in the questionnaire, then it is noted where applicable. If there were not enough candidates running, then we did not produce a Voter Guide for that seat.

## Join Our Growing Grassroots Coalition of Citizens, Churches/Nonprofit Organizations, and Media Partners Committed to Promoting the Voter Guide throughout Our Region

*Let's get the word out!*

It's simple. Just share our website URL all around the Hamilton County region:

[www.VoteChattanooga.org](http://www.VoteChattanooga.org)

Tell your friends and neighbors, post on social media, and ask your Pastors to promote it to your congregation (we'll even provide you /them with the announcement info and the slide deck.)

Please contact us for any reason, we'd love to collaborate with you: [Info@VoteChattanooga.org](mailto:Info@VoteChattanooga.org)

The "Small Print": The information contained in this document is being provided for informational purposes only. It was obtained directly from candidates and other sources, and we have done our best to convey it to you accurately, but nothing herein has been "fact checked". Utilize this Voter Guide at your own discretion. We take no responsibility for the factual nature of the content, or for publishing errors, etc. To the best of our knowledge, this Voter Guide is 501(c)(3)-compliant and officially nonpartisan, and thereby it does not support or oppose any candidate

Independent Survey by



**Hamilton County  
2026 Democrat Primary Election  
Voter Guide  
for County Mayor**

**County Mayor**

Independent Survey by



# County Mayor | Survey Questions Index

- 1) **Purpose:** What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Mayor?
- 2) **Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives:** What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Mayor?
- 3) **Budget:** What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?
- 4) **Constitutional Liberties:** As the County Mayor, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?
- 5) **Protecting Life:** What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?
- 6) **Moral Values:** Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?
- 7) **Speed cameras:** As mayor, will you continue to enforce speed cameras in school zones and residential areas throughout the county? If so, what oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?
- 8) **Zoning/Planning:** What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?
- 9) **Immigration:** What role, if any, do you believe the Mayor's office should have in guiding Hamilton County's cooperation with ICE and federal immigration enforcement?
- 10) **Adult Entertainment:** The Adult Entertainment Act (AEA) in Tennessee restricts certain adult performances, such as drag shows, in front of minors. Do you personally support the AEA, and regardless of your personal views, how would your office ensure its enforcement?
- 11) **Religious Freedom in the Workplace:** How would you ensure that government employees in Hamilton County are treated fairly and not discriminated against based on their religious beliefs, including situations involving workplace policies on gender identity, pronoun use (compelled speech), or related hiring practices?

Independent Survey by



# County Mayor

(In alphabetical order)



Mark Herndon

Independent Survey by





## Mark Herndon

### Candidate Information

<b>Email Address:</b>	herndonforhamilton@gmail.com
<b>Occupation/Vocation:</b>	Contractor
<b>Years as resident of:</b>	25 years
<b>Campaign Website:</b>	votemarkformayor.com

#### 1) Purpose: What do you view as the purpose and role of the County Mayor?

The County Mayor's role is to advocate for the people of Hamilton County and ensure their priorities are heard and acted on by the Commission. The mayor oversees the budget, guides economic development, and influences how tax dollars are spent. As your mayor, I believe this work should never be hidden from the public. Transparency and honesty are essential to good leadership, and the position should always serve the voters who entrusted it with power. My goal is to make county government accessible, accountable, and focused on the needs of the people rather than political convenience.

Independent Survey by



**2) Candidate's Focus/Expertise/Initiatives: What are your areas of special focus and/or expertise and what initiatives would you undertake as County Mayor?**

Education and affordability are the two issues that shape nearly every conversation I've had with residents. Our children deserve schools that meet their needs and a county that can sustain them after graduation. That means listening to teachers, funding classrooms responsibly, and ensuring families can afford to live and work here. When parents are forced to work multiple jobs just to get by, children lose the support they need at home — and that affects their future. I've also heard deep concerns about the mishandling of our health department. I want to expand essential services, not dismantle them, because strong communities require strong public health.

**3) Budget: What would be your top three spending, savings, and economic development priorities?**

My budget priorities center on responsible investment and long-term planning. For spending, I will prioritize education, public safety, and infrastructure — the foundations of a thriving county. Savings should come from a fiscally responsible administration that collaborates across departments and communities, ensuring tax dollars are used transparently and effectively. For economic development, we must manage growth sustainably so it doesn't outpace our ability to support it. That includes thoughtful planning for assets like McDonald Farm, investing in infrastructure such as sewer capacity, and addressing inflated administrative budgets that divert resources away from frontline services. Growth should benefit residents, not just developers, and we must lay groundwork now for the next generation.

**4) Constitutional Liberties: As the County Mayor, what measures will you champion to protect the individual Constitutional liberties of all Hamilton County residents, such as freedom of speech, peaceable assembly and exercise of religion?**

I will champion the constitutional rights of all Hamilton County residents. Government has no business deciding what people say, where they gather, or how they worship. Its responsibility is to ensure that speech is protected, that peaceful assembly is safeguarded, and that no faith receives preferential treatment. While the mayor's authority in this area is limited, I will always advocate for a clear separation between religion and government. Personal beliefs shape who we are, but they should not be used to elevate one religion over another. Freedom means every individual has the right to choose their faith without government influence.

**5) Protecting Life: What legal means, if any, would you support to protect the most vulnerable in our county, including the lives of the unborn, the trafficked, the poor and homeless, and the elderly?**

My responsibility as mayor is to represent all of Hamilton County and ensure legislation protects the rights and dignity of every resident. That includes supporting collaboration among nonprofits, faith-based groups, and community partners who work daily to protect vulnerable people with limited resources. I will push the county to contribute meaningfully to these efforts, especially for unhoused residents and those who have been neglected. When it comes to reproductive rights, the law is set at the state level, but I believe we cannot impose ethics on others without being willing to support the outcomes. (i.e. paid parental leave, healthcare, free and reduced meals) We must invest in our health department and offer assistance - not punish people for systemic failures.

**6) Moral Values: Should government laws, ordinances, regulations, etc. follow the moral principles of the Ten Commandments? Why, or why not?**

My moral compass is shaped by my faith, but the government must serve everyone — not just those who share my beliefs. Many principles in the Ten Commandments align with existing laws, but freedom of religion requires that no single faith guide our policies. Life is more complex than a list of rules, and governance must make room for people's lived experiences. My decisions will be grounded in integrity, but the role of government is not to enforce religious doctrine. It is to uphold the Constitution, protect individual freedoms, and ensure that every resident — regardless of belief — is treated with fairness and respect.

**7) Speed cameras: As mayor, will you continue to enforce speed cameras in school zones and residential areas throughout the county? If so, what oversight and transparency measures should be required to maintain public trust? Do speed cameras contradict constitutional protections within drivers' rights such as due process and the right to confront one's accuser?**

Right now, speed cameras function more as a weak revenue stream than an effective safety tool. They issue tickets without meaningfully slowing traffic, and that doesn't build trust or improve safety. I believe we can do better. Any approach to traffic calming should involve community input. Instead of relying on automated enforcement, we should explore design-based solutions and neighborhood-driven ideas that actually make roads safer for children and families (i.e. trees/light poles/planters, raised medians/crosswalks, dedicated pedestrian or bike lanes, roundabouts)

**8) Zoning/Planning: What policies would you support to prevent and disclose potential conflicts of interest between developers and members of Hamilton County's zoning and planning committees, and how would you ensure that land-use decisions are made transparently, ethically, and in the best interest of residents rather than private interests?**

Land-use decisions must be transparent, ethical, and free from conflicts of interest. When developers sit on planning bodies or have access to information unavailable to the public, it creates an uneven playing field and erodes trust. I support policies that prevent committee members from participating in decisions where they stand to benefit financially, and I believe developers should not have insider access to growth plans that allow them to buy land before communities even know what's coming. Growth should benefit neighbors, not just large developers. Equal opportunity, clear disclosure, and strong guardrails are essential to restoring fairness in our planning process.

**9) Immigration: What role, if any, do you believe the Mayor's office should have in guiding Hamilton County's cooperation with ICE and federal immigration enforcement?**

I believe in law enforcement that is accountable, transparent, and focused on keeping our neighborhoods safe — not acting as an extension of federal immigration enforcement without clear oversight. Programs like 287(g) risk pulling deputies away from their core mission and eroding trust in the communities they serve. We can support effective policing without sacrificing civil liberties or turning neighbors into targets. My priority is ensuring county departments maintain trust so immigrant communities can feel safe participating in civic life. Cooperation should never come at the expense of safety or humanity. Welcoming the stranger is a direct expression of faith, and how we treat the vulnerable is how we treat Christ Himself (Matthew 25:35-40)

**10) Adult Entertainment: The Adult Entertainment Act (AEA) in Tennessee restricts certain adult performances, such as drag shows, in front of minors. Do you personally support the AEA, and regardless of your personal views, how would your office ensure its enforcement?**

Decisions about what children are exposed to should rest with parents and guardians. The Adult Entertainment Act is state law, and my responsibility is to ensure that county departments enforce it fairly and consistently. At the same time, we must avoid using government power to target specific groups or forms of expression. My approach will be grounded in respect for families, clarity in enforcement, and a commitment to ensuring that no community feels singled out or politicized.

**11) Religious Freedom in the Workplace: How would you ensure that government employees in Hamilton County are treated fairly and not discriminated against based on their religious beliefs, including situations involving workplace policies on gender identity, pronoun use (compelled speech), or related hiring practices?**

Hamilton County should be a model employer — a place where people of all backgrounds feel respected and able to serve their community. That means protecting employees from discrimination based on religion while also ensuring a workplace grounded in respect, professionalism, and inclusion. Our workforce should reflect the diversity of our county, and policies should support that diversity rather than restrict it. Freedom of religion and freedom of expression must coexist with a safe, welcoming environment for all employees. When people feel valued, they can do their best work for the residents they serve.

Independent Survey by



# Church Voter Guides Sponsors

*Thank You to All of Our Volunteers, Sponsors, and Media Partners  
who Helped Produce and Promote this Voter Guide!*



Activate Hamilton Supports True Conservative Candidates.

Are you are fed up with Republicans who vote like Democrats? You know, the ones that are more worried about offending than leading.

Then go to [activatehamilton.com](https://activatehamilton.com) and see who we are endorsing!

Follow us:   [activate.hamilton](https://www.instagram.com/activate.hamilton) ·  [Activ8Hamilton](https://twitter.com/Activ8Hamilton)

[activatehamilton.com](https://activatehamilton.com)



**CALVARY CHAPEL**  
CHATTANOOGA

 **Microsoft**  
Partner

Call today for a free 15  
minute consultation



[www.XferWorx.com](https://www.XferWorx.com)

423-417-9240

*The views and opinions of our sponsors do not necessarily reflect the views of Church Voter Guides*

Independent Survey by



# Church Voter Guides Sponsors

*Thank You to All of Our Volunteers, Sponsors, and Media Partners  
who Helped Produce and Promote this Voter Guide!*



An advertisement for "How to Run for Office as a Christian Conservative" training. It features a checkmark icon, the title "HOW TO RUN FOR OFFICE AS A CHRISTIAN CONSERVATIVE", and a photo of Pastor Bill Redmond. The text includes: "Comprehensive Campaign Training with a Biblical Worldview", "For Current and Prospective Candidates, Campaign Consultants and Managers, Candidate Families, Pastors, Campaign Volunteers, and All Citizens who Wish to Serve Our Nation by Glorifying God through Government", "Winning Back America ... One Candidate at a Time!", and the website "www.RunForOffice.training".

Logo for "choices" featuring a heart icon inside a speech bubble. Below the logo is a blue banner with the text "Saving and transforming lives since 1985".

- ♥ VISIT [TEAM.CHOICESCHATTANOOGA.ORG](http://TEAM.CHOICESCHATTANOOGA.ORG)
- ♥ FOLLOW [TEAM.CHOICESCHATT](https://www.facebook.com/TEAM.CHOICESCHATT)  
- ♥ GET INVOLVED!



Advertisement for "july 2 life.com" featuring a background image of the U.S. Capitol building. The text includes: "july 2 life.com" in a colorful, cursive font, "3 million letters to end abortion", and a small American flag icon.

*The views and opinions of our sponsors do not necessarily reflect the views of Church Voter Guides*

Independent Survey by



# Church Voter Guides Media Partners

*Thank You to All of Our Volunteers, Sponsors, and Media Partners  
who Helped Produce and Promote this Voter Guide!*



Independent Survey by

