



## Jefferson County Candidate Questionnaire

### Candidate Information

Full Name: Jeffery Edward Underwood

Office Sought: Jefferson County Commissioner of the 5<sup>th</sup> District

Website / Campaign Page: Facebook Homepage "Jeff Underwood"

### 1. Why are you running for this office?

"First, I want to thank each of you for your service to our country. The freedoms we enjoy in Jefferson County today are because men and women like you were willing to step up and serve." The reason I am running for County Commissioner is simple - I love this county and believe in serving the community that raised me. Jefferson County is where I was born, where my family farms, and where my kids and grandkids are growing up. I want to make sure it stays a place where families can live, work and raise their kids the right way. Just like military service is about putting the mission and people first. I believe public service should be about putting the citizens first-not politics. I want to protect our farmland, manage growth responsibly, support our schools and first responders, and make sure that our county government stays transparent and accountable to the people. "At the end of the day, I'm running because I believe in service – and serving Jefferson County is my way of giving back. "

### 2. Military Service

Are you a Veteran?  Yes  No

I want to explain the reason why. When I was 8 years old, I lost my right eye due to an accident. I most likely would have joined the army if I could have. In my family, there were a lot of service members, when I was growing up and when I married my wife, she had family members who also served. I had 3 great uncles who served and two gave the ultimate sacrifice, in WW2. One on my mom's side and one on my dad's side. (1) Bettis (1) Underwood. Also, I had one uncle who serve in the Korean War, two cousins who served in Vietnam. My son (Matthew Underwood) was an Airborne Army Ranger in the 173<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. He had two tours in Afghanistan Korengal Valley. After he returned, he finished college and then was the VSO for Jefferson County. I had many talks with him on the needs and what he did while he had his tenure as the VSO. During my life I have always had great respect for Veterans "Past, Present, and Future".

- Branch of Service: N/A
- Dates of Service: N/A
- Areas Served: N/A
- Highest Rank / Position Held: N/A
- Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or Equivalent: N/A
- Awards or Decorations (optional): N/A

### 3. Previous Support of Veterans

If you have served in an elected position in this Jefferson County or any other political offices in the past, what have you done to support Veterans? I have not served in any position that would affect veterans. I have served on the USDA, Farm Bureau and Jefferson Farmers Coop Board for several terms.

### 4. Priorities to Support Veterans

Jefferson County has a growing veteran population of more than 4,000 veterans. Please outline your top 3 priorities to support veterans and their families. 1. Provide them with more training to better understand how to apply for benefits. 2. I have made trips in the past few days to the veteran's service office but have not been able to meet with the VSO. It is my understanding that she is out visiting veterans 2 days a week and one day on Fridays she is not there because it is a catch-up day. So, I support always having someone there. I think more transparency on what is happening should be made. 3. I think more involvement from county government with the veterans is something that is needed. I would commit to doing so I have a better understanding of what the needs are. Sometimes, not being a veteran, I am not sure that I should go there. I really think better interactions with non-veterans and veterans are important so people like me can better understand their needs. I would say seek first to understand and then act. But one thing for sure is that I will commit to making that happen.

### 5. Veteran Services and Resources

What specific actions would you take to improve access to veteran services at the county level? As stated above, I feel someone should always be available in the VSO office. No veteran should go there to find no one available.

### 6. Veterans Service Officer (VSO)

What do you know about the Veterans Service Officer (VSO) program in Jefferson County, and do you have a stance on reporting structure or if this should be a director position? Since I have not been a commissioner before, I am not sure what happens now. The one thing that I feel is any one in that position should be available for all veterans. I am not sure that this is happening right now. We must have the office open more.

What would you do to strengthen and support the VSO to ensure Veterans receive timely and effective assistance?

I am data driven and less opinion driven. I would like to see how many veterans are being seen daily, weekly, monthly and annually. I am not sure whether this is being provided or not. Based on this, I would seek to understand why more are not being attended or worked with. (if this is the case) Our goal should be that all veterans could be served as they served this country.

7. Additional Veteran-Related Issues

Please identify any other veteran-related issues you believe need attention in Jefferson County and how you would address them. I think I have listed the items above.

8. Closing Statement or short biography

(Optional) I was born here in Jefferson County and married a local high school sweetheart. God has provided us with two wonderful children who now have provided my wife and I four grandchildren. When I was little, I worked on many family farms, including my great uncle's who is where Patriot Hills is today. I brought my children up to be responsible, work hard, honor God and respect others. I can say anyone that knows me and my family will vouch for this. I have also worked in manufacturing for 47 years and farmed more. I always felt if I could not have served that I can work hard in society to help provide for our country's needs. I am still working and at this point travel a lot to support my job. I have traveled to Germany, Brazil, Mexico, and many other places that are within the United States. No matter where I go, I can't wait to get back to Jefferson County where my roots are. When I was younger, I remember that my father believed a man's word meant something. I have carried this throughout my life. So, I want to say something, I give you my word that I will work hard to support our veterans. I also want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to express myself. God Bless.

Signature: Jeffrey S. Kirk Date: 3/10/26