



Jefferson County Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Information

Full Name: Jan Leja

Office Sought: County Commission District 1, Republican Primary

Website / Campaign Page:

1. Why are you running for this office?

Please describe your motivation and what qualifies you for this position.

I'm motivated by a simple idea: good leadership listens first. People deserve a commissioner who is accessible, transparent, and willing to do the hard work of understanding issues from every angle. I want families and veterans to feel confident that their voices matter and that their county government is working for them, not around them. I have over 25 years of experience in public policy, strategic planning, and mediation. I've worked on the kinds of issues that county governments handle every day – infrastructure challenges, public safety, zoning, and community planning, while working to improve economic opportunities and increase financial efficiency. My experience includes federal and local public policy challenges.

2. Military Service

Are you a Veteran? Yes No

If yes, please provide:

I personally was not in the military, but I am the spouse of a veteran, Doug Leja USAF (28 years, active and reserves)

- Branch of Service:

- Dates of Service:

- Areas Served:

- Highest Rank / Position Held:

- Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or Equivalent:

- Awards or Decorations (optional):

3. Previous Support of Veterans

If you have served in an elected position in Jefferson County or held any other political office in the past, what have you done to support Veterans? I have served as a mayor for a small town. I also have served as Special Projects

Director and District Field Representative for two U.S. Congressmen: Colonel Paul Cook, a retired U.S. Marine, and Congressman Jay Obernolte. Part of my responsibilities included organizing and developing veterans' honor events and informational workshops about available services. I continue to run the Military Service Academy Congressional Nomination program for Congressman Obernolte.

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. Supporting our VSO in reaching and assisting veterans. 2. Working with VSO and other departments in pursuing Home Modification Grants to adapt homes for disabled veterans. 3. Employment & Education Support program (VR&E) and community opportunities for veterans. It depends on local needs.

5. Veteran Services and Resources

What specific actions would you take to improve access to veteran services at the county level? Work with appropriate staff and other agencies in assessing the current needs of our Jefferson County veterans. Prepare a financial strategic plan, including previously listed programs in the #4 answer, to meet the needs identified in that assessment. Aggressively pursuing grants and working toward improving the overall economic health of our County to provide opportunities for veterans and families of Jefferson County. Adequately staffing our VSO

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? We have previously utilized the office and found the current Director to be extremely knowledgeable, proactive, and helpful. From my perspective, the director should be part of the organizational structure and report directly to the Mayor, as other directors do.

What would you do to strengthen and support the VSO to ensure Veterans receive timely and effective assistance? Provide adequate staffing support that aligns with the needs and resources available to the County and to veterans. I will work to have strategic planning sessions to establish goals with each department before formulating each year's budget. Then, adopt a responsible budget that can see the department throughout the year.

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. Currently, I believe that we need to fully develop the services that we have. Assess the needs that our veterans have and match private and public grants to develop programs that can assist our veteran community.

8. Closing Statement or short biography. I was born and raised in Upper East Tennessee, where I learned the values that still guide me today. I believe in practical solutions, honest conversations, and treating every person with dignity – whether we agree or not. I'm ready to work every day to make Jefferson County a place where our families and community members can thrive. I respectfully ask for your vote on May 5th. Your support means everything to me and to the future of our community. Thank you for your service and consideration.

Signature: Jan Leja Date: 3/24 / 2026