

# Candidate Responses – Orange County Sheriff

**Stephen LaLuna**

Question 1: Position Seeking:

SL: Sheriff of Orange County

Question 2: Have You Previously Held this Position?

SL: No

Question 3: Will you be attending the August 23, 2023, Orange County Candidate Showcase?

SL: Yes

Question 4: What are the biggest challenges you think you will face if you were elected to serve?

SL: The biggest challenge will be bringing the Sheriff's Office to a level to achieve accreditation. This requires extensive work in going through how the Sheriff's Office handled policies, evidence, and personnel to ensure they align with the highest professional standards. It's a massive undertaking but is one that the Sheriff's Office needs to hold itself accountable, be transparent, and instill confidence in the community it serves. Accreditation fosters public trust and confidence and provides an objective validation of the Sheriff's Office's adherence to rigorous standards of conduct and ethics.

Question 5: Do you support civilian oversight of law enforcement and how would you encourage community participation in law enforcement oversight?

SL: As your future Sheriff, community involvement is a top priority to me, and I have put a lot of thought into ways to involve the citizens and make the Sheriff's Office more the citizen Sheriff's Office and an Office they can be proud of. I will be creating a Citizen Representation Committee (CRC). The CRC will be made up of citizens representing the different communities and diversities around Orange County. The CRC will meet with my administration regularly and give input and advice as a citizen sounding board. They may be asked to conduct independent research, assist in creating new programs that benefit the community, generate new ideas or solutions to help solve issues the citizens observe in the County, and provide informed recommendations on public policies and practices. We will also hold regularly scheduled firehouse meetings where the community can come meet me and my deputies and talk about things that they would like to see or issues they are having. It can also be used to address deputies about the positive issues they are seeing. I will also create a forum for posting what is discussed in these firehouse meetings for all citizens that were unable to attend to stay up to date and stay informed.

Question 6: New residents to Orange County will likely witness normal agricultural practices such as manure spreading, pesticide application and slow-moving farm machinery on our roads and highways. How can the County help support peaceful coexistence between existing farm operations and new residents to the community? What will you do, if elected, to help educate the general public about the agricultural industry?

SL: Orange is a community that has deep ties to agriculture. This deep Agricultural history is one of the many things that makes Orange an amazing place to live. As Sheriff, my Deputies

will be educated on the agriculture industry and how to deal with questions and concerns of citizens who may just not understand what's occurring. We need to integrate our office more into the farming community as partners. Programs like 4H, the Orange county fair, and others need to be priorities when it comes to having deputies there for not only security during events but also to get to know the folks in the communities so they can better educate the public on these issues. The same goes for animal control and making sure our deputies understand the farming community, large animal issues, and how to better deal with the situations that arise. I also plan to organize educational workshops and farm tours with farm owners willing to participate and collaborate on events that connect citizens with farmers. By facilitating conversations and providing firsthand experiences, we can build a foundation of knowledge that promotes harmonious coexistence between our residents and the agricultural sector.

Question 7: Do you support rehabilitation programs in prisons, jail, and in the local community, and if so, how would you advocate to continue expanding funding for these programs?

SL: As a narcotics officer, I see firsthand how drugs are plaguing our community and all communities around the United States. This is the topic that typically comes to mind when talking about rehab in general. As Sheriff, I support having a rehabilitative option available in every setting. With rehabilitation, we need mental health services as well and the ability to help treat every aspect of what someone is dealing with. I would work with local resources such as social services, the commonwealth attorney's office, and the board of supervisors to talk about funding options for expanding and starting programs that the county needs. To do this, I will highlight success stories of rehabilitation and collaborate with local and neighboring community organizations. With the community, local government, and organizations working together, we will be able to showcase their positive impact on reducing relapse rates and promoting overall well-being. I will use all available data gathered to seek funding and grants at the state and federal levels.

Question 8: Members of the agriculture community often experience trespass on their property. If elected, how would you protect the personal property rights for all citizens of Orange?

SL: As your Sheriff, your rights are paramount to me. Your constitutional rights will always be at the forefront of everything me or my deputies are doing. As someone that owns a small farm myself, I know how frustrating these problems can be and the feeling you get knowing someone you don't want on your property has free reign to walk about your property. If elected, I would work closely with farmers and landowners to implement proactive measures such as increased patrols, community watch programs, and educational campaigns to deter trespassing. As Sheriff, I will make every effort to track down, identify and bring to prosecution persons who trespass and violate the law. I will make sure Deputies are conducting follow-ups on issues regarding trespass. We will utilize technology to help identify persons committing trespass. We will work more closely with the game department and other agencies when it comes to these types of issues.

Question 9: Nationally, law enforcement has struggled with retention and recruitment. What plans do you have to address and improve these issues in Orange County?

SL: Let's start with retention. First and foremost, we must make sure we are taking care of the Deputies we have at every level. We must get rid of old, outdated practices that are being used in the Sheriff's Office. Just because "we've always done it this way" doesn't mean it's the right way. Deputies should look forward to serving the community and the community should feel

comfortable, safe, and trust the Deputies that are serving them. Deputies arriving on a scene should give the citizens a feeling of familiarity, like seeing an old friend, instead of a feeling of dread and/or unease.

We must boost morale and make the Sheriff's Office a place where people want to work and are proud of their job. This includes a more comfortable uniform, better scheduling, preferred sector assignments and acknowledge Deputy training requests they feel will be beneficial to them to better serve the community. Deputies will be encouraged to focus on the community and get to know the citizens and business owners and employees. This will create familiarity and a better understanding when responding to the area for calls of service, which in turn, will create a better experience for everyone. We need to improve the retention rate. We must change the culture and make it one where every deputy has a fair chance to be promoted based on their job performance, motivation for self-improvement, and training and experience. As far as recruitment, once we fix the retention problem, recruitment will become easier. I think we should remove barriers like binding contracts. I believe this will aid in retaining employees and make the department more appealing to potential recruits.

A Deputy Foundation will be created once I am elected. This will be headed by a third-party committee and will benefit Deputies and their families. I will personally donate to this fund every year from funds earned from Accreditation. This foundation will focus on fund raisers and raising money for the foundation which in turn will be used to support Deputy mental health, assist Deputies and their families in cases of hard times, injuries or worse. Deputies will know the Sheriff's Office and the County they love, serve, and take care of every day will also take care of them and their families should the need ever arise.

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