



# State, local turnout show low participation

**Vivian Mejia**  
Reporter

Benton County and Arkansas voter turnout appeared to be less than 30 percent in preliminary returns for the March 5 primaries, local elections and non-partisan judicial races.

Benton County's voting participation was under 20% with preliminary, unofficial numbers showing 33,912 ballots cast or 18.72% voter participation.

County voters cast 28,573 Republican ballots, 4,606 Democratic ballots and 733 nonpartisan judicial ballots. The early votes tallied 15,720 ballots cast with 302 absentees and 15,418 ballots cast at early voting locations. The registered voters counted to be 181,192 with an 8.68% early voter turnout in Benton County.

Washington County early voting tallied to have 8,897 ballots casted with 138,184 registered voters, coming out to be an 6.44% early voting turnout in the county.

The lower participation rate is

keeping with the trend that experts predicted in interviews prior to election day.

"Based on previous years, we are predicting a voter turnout of 30% to 40%," Jennifer Price, Washington County election coordinator, said last month. "The numbers are slightly higher for a presidential primary."

Andrew Dowdle, professor of political science at the University of Arkansas, explained some of the reasons it's important to vote. "Because the turnout rate is lower, individual voters have more weight in the process, which may be a reason to vote," he said. While voter turnout is higher in presidential election years, turnout in primaries is usually half of what it is in a general election.

"Voter turnout may be lower this year, as the Democratic race is uncontested and the Republican race may be decided by then, unlike 2016, when both parties had competitive races," Dowdle said.

Carol Stuckey, one of the Benton County poll workers at NWACC, said she hoped that more young voters

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# Biden, Trump, Womack Win on Tuesday

**Kay King**  
Senior Reporter

In Arkansas Super Tuesday March 5 balloting, voters chose Democrat Joe Biden and Republican Donald J. Trump to be the standard bearers for the two major political parties. Voters also favored Third District Congressman Steve Womack as the party's nominee for the Nov. 5 general election.

In other votes, the race for Arkansas Supreme Court Chief Justice appears to be headed for a runoff. Neither of the top two vote getters, Rhonda Wood and Karen Baker, received more than 50% of the vote. Associate Justice Courtney Hudson defeated challenger Carlton D. Jones for Position 2 on the State Supreme Court. Hudson's election to the seat means there will likely be an appointment to her current position.

In addition to the state nonpartisan judicial races and the presidential party primaries, there were several

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choose to cast ballots and begin to make voting a lifetime habit. “I just want to be part of the election, help out,” Stuckey said.

At approximately 4 p.m. March 5, Stuckey said 169 people had voted. Later, 236 people had cast ballots by 6:15 p.m.

Arkansas has historically low registration and turnout. In fact, the state had the lowest voter registration and turnout in national elections of any U.S. state, and voter turnout has declined in the past two generations, according to the Arkansas Civic Health Index and a report from the National Conference on Citizenship.

The Arkansas Civic Health Index report was issued in late 2023. The report was produced in a cooperative effort of the National Conference on Citizenship, Engage Arkansas, the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute, Central Arkansas Library System, University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service and the Arkansas

Peace & Justice Memorial Movement.

Primary elections are races in which voters can choose a political party’s candidates based on the ballot they request. Arkansas holds what are known as “open primaries,” where any registered voter may vote for one of a party’s nominees based on the party they select on Election Day. However, they are limited to voting for that party’s nominees in each race. There is also another voting option, which is a nonpartisan ballot. This ballot only contains nonpartisan judicial elections, annual and special school elections.

According to the Arkansas Civic Health Index’s figures regarding voter turnout, 44.7% of Arkansans reported voting in the last presidential election in 2020, compared to a national average of 55.3%. A presidential election year in Arkansas always kicks off with primary elections.

Barriers to voting identified by residents include long lines at polling

Turnout Continued from pg 1 places, lack of transportation and disqualification due to prior criminal convictions.

NWACC has hosted a polling location for several elections, and Stuckey, who was working at the location on Tuesday, said that college students were among the voters.

Matt Evans, professor of political science at NWACC, said that college students typically have the lowest voter turnout and retired individuals have the highest.

“This dynamic means that those closer to death exercise an outsized influence over those further away from it. We have a gerontocracy and that works counter to democracy, and that delegitimizes the outcome of elections, as well as law, policy, and taxation by the government,” Evans said.

*Stephanie Roat, Delaney Reaves and Samantha McClain contributed to this report.*

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other contests and issues being decided on March 5 balloting.

Bella Vista voters approved funding for police officers' pensions, and Centerton voters approved continuing refunding bonds and a tax question in addition to issuing bonds for a new community center. Centerton voters also approved street improvement bonds.

Avoca voters narrowly approved a \$75 increase in annual fire dues. The complete but unofficial tally was 263 votes for and 259 votes against. All results for March 5 voting are unofficial and preliminary until certified by the Benton

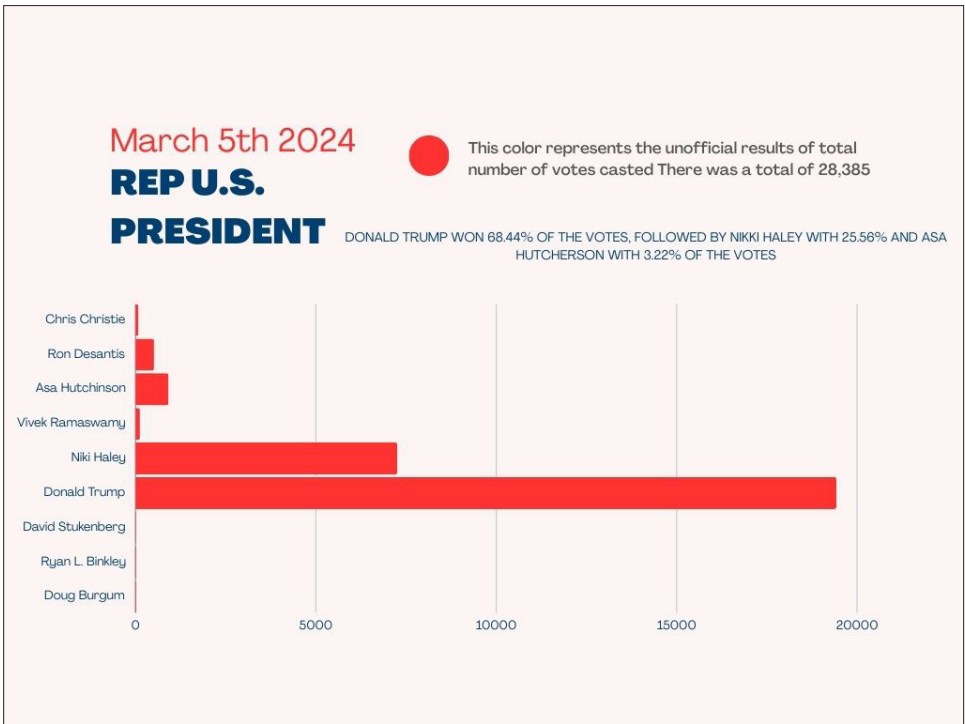
County Election Commission.

In Benton County JP Republican balloting, incumbents Jeff Dunn, Joel Jones and Joel Edwards received their party's nod. John Good Rissler received 60 plus percent of the vote in the race for JP in District 12. There is no Democratic challenger in November.

For the Benton County Prosecutor seat Bryan Sexton defeated Sarah Phillips. Sexton, who's filling the vacancy created by Nathan Smith's resignation in 2023.

Voter turnout was anemic in Benton County with 18.72% of registered voters casting ballots.

# Unofficial Results for Benton County Republican Primary Contest



Graphic by Stephanie Roat. Graphic made with Canva.

Nine people ran for president and the unofficial results are in. Chris Christie had 0.29% of votes. Ron DeSantis had 1.81% of votes. Asa Hutchinson had 3.22% of votes. Vivek Ramaswamy had 0.44% of votes. Nikki Haley won 25.56% of votes and Donald J. Trump had 68.44% of votes. David Stuckenber had 0.07% of votes. Ryan L. Binkley had 0.08% of votes. Doug Burgum won 0.09% of votes. A total of 28,385 ballots were casted, 12,889 early votes and 15,291 were casted on Election Day.

# Womack Wins Republican Nomination for Arkansas' 3rd District

**Morgan Nunley**

Managing Editor News & Sports

As of 9:40 p.m. Tuesday (March 5), Womack leads the Republican Party primary for the Third Congressional District over Clint Penzo. With about 85% of the votes tallied, unofficial returns show Womack holding a lead over Penzo at 55% to 45% and about a 6,000 vote lead. The only county that hasn't reported any voting numbers is Carroll County. If the numbers hold, Womack is expected to face Democratic candidate Caitlin Draper Mattelin on the Nov. 5 general election ballot.

Womack was elected as the representative for the 3rd Congressional District of Arkansas in 2010 and has been a successful congressman to this point, winning two primaries and seven general elections.

Arkansas' Third District accounts for parts of six counties in the northwest corner of the Natural State. The counties include Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, and part of Sebastian. Places of note within the district include cities like Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Rogers, Springdale, and Bentonville.

Both men have different upbringings and values, while also sharing some similarities, with the most notable being that both men are in the Republican Party.

Penzo has stated that some of his issues and stances include "fighting for individual liberty and limited government, opposing vaccine mandates and opposing tax increases." Penzo's website included other concerns such as illegal immigration, national debt, abortion, law

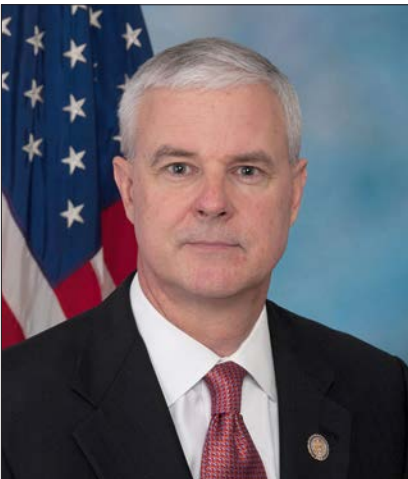
enforcement and veterans, as well as limits on the federal government and firearm regulations.

Womack's core set of concerns in his bid for re-election includes supporting the military, continuing to call for conservatism in the administration, serving the needs of his constituents, as well as national debt. Other issues listed on his campaign website were abortion, agriculture, budget, defense, education, energy, foreign affairs, healthcare, immigration, small business, Social Security, tax reform, and transportation.

Daniel Bennett, a political science professor at John Brown University, gave his expectations and thoughts on the race, before the primaries kicked off. Bennett spoke about both Womack and Penzo. He said going into the March 5 vote Womack had an edge, given many factors, and most notably his status as the incumbent.

"The fact that he can claim credit and experience as a conservative Republican in a conservative district gives him a major leg up on his challengers," Bennett said. Womack has the advantage due to his experience and knowledge of the legislation and the process of the district.

Regarding Penzo, Bennett argued that his efforts to turn the constituents of the district against Womack would be his biggest advantage coming into the March primary. Bennett stated that Penzo was also seeking to capitalize on the difference between Womack and himself in supporting former President Trump at the top of the ticket. Bennett said that Penzo is banking on these voters to oust Womack in favor of a more "Trump" Republican.



Steve Womack



Clint Penzo

# Avoca Voters Narrowly OK Increase for Fire Dues

## Centernton, Bella Vista Also Approve Measures

**Delaney Reaves**  
Editor-In-Chief

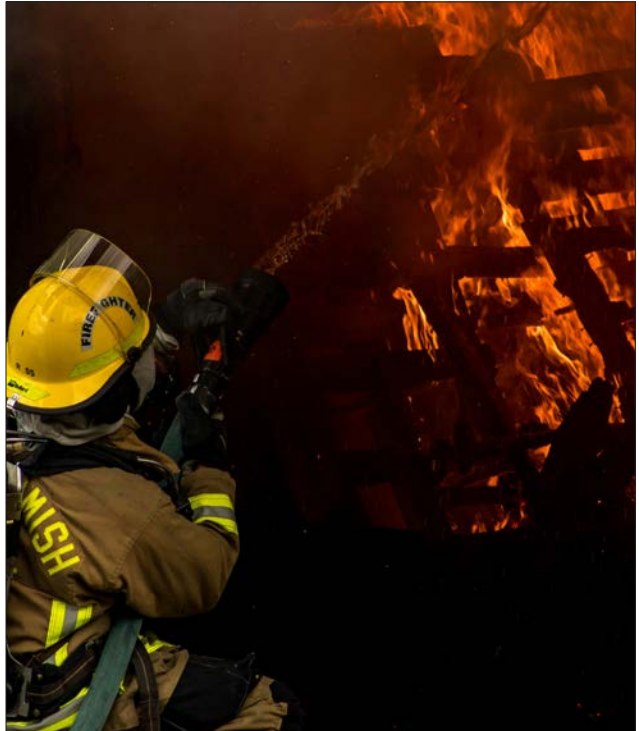
The Avoca Fire Dues ballot measure has been approved with a complete but unofficial 4-vote gap with an increase barely passing the primary election. All votes stand unofficial and preliminary until properly certified by the Benton County Election Commission which usually takes place ten days after election day.

The Avoca Fire and Rescue Department took to the March ballot to increase dues to \$125 per household this spring as the first dues increase question since 2007. The Avoca Fire Department has had dues of \$50 for the past 17 years. The department started in 1979 with dues being set at \$25 per household.

If the narrow vote on the March 5 ballot stands, the Avoca dues will increase to \$125.

The annual dues will fall on each residence including businesses that have a structure established within the district of the volunteer-run Avoca fire department. This change will be listed on real property tax statements, collected near the same time and manner as the real property taxes handled annually. This comes into accordance with A.C.A. 14-20-108, Arkansas code that allows requests to be filed to the Quorum Court regarding volunteer fire departments.

According to the resolution and ordinance document on bentoncountyar.gov, the volunteer fire department requires “annual dues to provide



adequate fire and rescue protection in its service area.”

“The costs have risen since 2007 to the point that annual dues of \$50 are no longer sufficient for the Avoca Fire & Rescue department to provide safe and adequate protection in its service area,” the document states.

The question proposed “Increasing the Annual Dues of The Avoca Fire and Rescue Department for Fire Protection Services; Designating the County Official Who Will Collect and Remit the Annual Dues Charged by The Department; And Prescribing Other Matters Pertaining Thereto.”

Justice of the Peace Jeff Dunn said, “Volunteer fire departments

Photo by Jay Heike from Unsplash are crucial...they are not responsible for the people that live there; they are responsible for everything that happens inside those lines.”

### County Justices of the Peace

The Arkansas party primaries have set the stage for the general election in November 2024. The March 5 Republican primary allowed voters to decide the party’s nominees for justice of the peace to appear on the ballot in November.

In District 1, incumbent Jeff Dunn leads the unofficial count with 52.63% with Michael McCaskey holding 47.37% in favor. In District  
Continues to pg 7

8, incumbent Joel Jones leads 51.92% facing challenger Lisa Richards who trails with 48.08% unofficial votes.

In Benton County’s District 12, which includes the city of Siloam Springs, voters decided that the newly opened Justice of the Peace seat will go to John Good Rissler, who garnered 60.66% against Caroline Geer for the Republican nomination. No one from the Democratic Party filed for that position. The incumbent, Ron Homeyer, did not seek re-election.

In Benton County’s District 15, which includes an area near Centerton, incumbent Joel Edwards has 66.20% of votes against challenger Andrew Sova who holds 33.80% unofficial votes. There were no contested JP races for the Democratic Party’s nomination.

Along with the Avoca fire dues increase proposal, voters in affected areas considered a bond issue question for Centerton and a police pension

tax question for Bella Vista. The Centerton question proposed an extension on current bonds and approval for a new bond that could potentially bring a new community center, expand the Centerton police department and provide street improvements. According to the unofficial returns, all Centerton bond and tax proposal questions were passed with more than 60% of votes in favor. One of the measures will allow the city to build a new community center.

The police pension tax for Bella Vista will go for retired police officers’ pensions. The ballot item for Bella Vista proposes that an “Ad valorem property tax in the amount of an addition 0.5 mills on the dollar upon the assessed value of the real and personal property in the city.”

The Bella Vista Police Officers Pension was approved by the voters with 57.70% for the ballot measure, according to unofficial results

Avoca Continued from pg 6 provided by the Benton County Election Commission.

Residents of counties who do not live in incorporated towns receive services from the county government including roads, police and water, said Matt Evans, NWACC political science professor, said. The way things are administered and paid for is handled by the Quorum Court, which is made up of Justices of the Peace. A Justice of the Peace serves a geographical district, or subdivision of the county.

“The Quorum Court is a legislative body that determines issues of taxation and policy on the county level, and thus determines how to allocate resources to local sheriff’s offices, jails, and for county employees and services,” Evans said.



Photo by Jay Heike from Unsplash

# Biden, Trump Win Arkansas Primaries

**Braiden Burton**  
Reporter

**Jair Juarez**  
Reporter

Super Tuesday in Arkansas ended as was predicted as both Donald Trump and Joe Biden won their respective parties' primaries by a landslide of votes. The Natural State followed suit of nearly every other on Tuesday night, with the great majority of ballots being cast exclusively for these two frontrunners alone.

As of 9 p.m. CST, all but two states were yet to cast their ballots for both the Republican and Democratic Parties. As was strongly predicted, Trump and Biden faced little to no threat in securing their respective party's nomination for nearly every one of the 15 states. Nikki Haley, Trump's strongest competition in the Republican Primaries, managed to win the state of Vermont around 9:40 p.m. CST – the only outlier of the entire night. Current President Joe Biden's Primary Election proved to be particularly inevitable as he secured state

after state with 85% to 95% of votes. In Arkansas' case, Donald Trump won the Republican Primary Election with nearly 75% of the votes, while Biden won the Democratic Primary with over 90%. With such a one-sided outcome to 2024's Super Tuesday, Americans likely now look ahead to a heated rematch that will decide the next President of the United States.

Super Tuesday, an electoral phenomenon unique to American politics, emerges as a pivotal moment in the presidential primary race, where a considerable number of states hold their primaries or assemblies on the same day. This year, on March 5, a total of 16 states and American Samoa held primaries and caucuses for the 2024 presidential election.

Daniel Bennett, associate professor of political science at John Brown University, was asked about the strategies of gaining support on campaigns. He pointed out the primary strategies employed by campaigns for Super Tuesday are maximizing voter turnout and support with a multifaceted approach, including traditional methods such as making calls, knocking on doors, and extensive advertising

campaigns. The goal is to engage with voters and underscore the importance of their participation in the electoral process. However, with the rise of early voting and absentee ballots, campaigns must adapt their strategies to identify and mobilize supporters earlier in the election cycle.

The outcome of Super Tuesday holds immense significance in the presidential primary race, historically serving as a barometer of candidate viability and momentum. However, in recent cycles, its impact has diminished, particularly when candidates have already established clear frontrunner status.

Candidates whose names appear on the ballot in Arkansas met a filing deadline of Nov. 14, 2023. Since that time, both Democratic and Republican races have changed significantly, but the March 5 ballots reflect that earlier deadline. Voters in Arkansas will see several candidate names on the Republican and Democratic party ballots for the presidential nominees. Candidates who have suspended their campaigns, such as former Gov. Asa Hutchinson and Florida Gov. Ron

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DeSantis, were still on the GOP ballot even though Nikki Haley and Donald Trump are the two remaining active candidates. On the Democratic side, ballots will include five other candidate names in addition to incumbent President Joe Biden.

Matt Evans, a political science professor at Northwest Arkansas Community College, was asked about the evolving nature of Super Tuesday’s significance. He noted that its impact may vary depending on the competitiveness of the primary contests and the candidates’ established frontrunner status. “Super Tuesday is only meaningful when you have competitive presidential primaries,” he said. Evans emphasizes that without viable challengers to former President Trump and President Biden,

the internal processes of each party provide predictable results, making Super Tuesday a non-issue in this election cycle.

Despite polling data indicating voter displeasure with both Biden and Trump, and rumblings within party ranks about potential alternatives these factors have not translated into significant challenges to the frontrunners. In past elections, Super Tuesday served as a battleground where upstart candidates could demonstrate their viability and challenge the establishment. However, without such struggles between contenders, the role of Super Tuesday has been relegated to a mere formality.

Janine Parry, a professor of political science at the University of Arkansas and director of the Arkansas

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Poll, was asked to reflect on what the Arkansas Poll’s 2022 and 2023 findings might tell observers about what to expect in Arkansas’ 2024 primaries.

“The last couple of years of Arkansas poll data tell us two, perhaps contradictory things: first that we’ll see far higher participation, again, in the Republican Primary than in the Democratic one,” Parry said in an email. “After the briefest sort of flirtation with two-party politics, Arkansas has emphatically returned to a one-party monopoly. On the other hand, Democrats and Independents may do what they can in the technically nonpartisan judicial races, especially locally. All that said, it would be surprising to see more than 28% of eligible voters statewide participate.”

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# Sexton wins race for Benton County prosecutor

## Samantha McClain

Managing Online Editor

Bryan Sexton, chief deputy of the Benton County Prosecutor’s Office, won his election against former colleague Sarah Phillips in Tuesday’s balloting. In preliminary, unofficial results, Sexton received 56% of the vote to Phillips’ 44%.

Sexton told the Eagle View that in September he will have 18 years of experience in the prosecutor’s office, and he had wanted the job of Prosecuting Attorney since he graduated from law school. He is on staff in the prosecutor’s office and has handled many cases, ranging from juvenile to capital murder. Sexton trained officers in the NorthWest Arkansas Community College Child Advocacy Studies program, investigating child abuse cases, such as physical evidence collected from the scene and how to give medical attention to an abused child.

Part of the job as chief deputy is to take over for the prosecutor if they are unavailable and learn how to handle dealing with policies. According to bentoncountyar.gov, the prosecuting attorney is responsible for all criminal prosecution of state crimes in Benton County and represents Benton County and the Quorum Court on all civil matters.

Sexton’s top priority as Prosecuting Attorney is implementing the Protect Arkansas Act and educating other prosecutors. He also wants to work with law agencies and law enforcement to prepare cases and streamline the process.

“There is this perception in the



Bryan Sexton

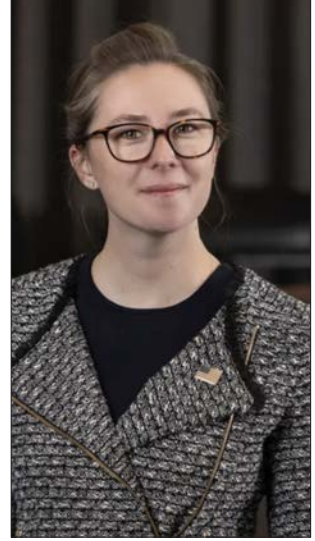
Photo belongs to Bryan Sexton

media that is looked down upon,” he said. “There are a lot of opportunities for students going into law, and law enforcement cares about the community.”

Phillips is senior manager of the Global Threat Management Team at Wal-Mart Inc. and was a former sex crimes prosecutor who specialized in crimes against children.

After Nathan Smith resigned in October 2023, people contacted her and encouraged her to join the race, Phillips said. Phillips had been practicing law during and after law school at the University of Arkansas School of Law and was a prosecutor for Benton County from 2016 until the fall of 2022.

Phillips’ priorities as prosecuting attorney would have been to bring better speed and efficiency in cases, fairness and impartiality, and more significant consideration of community safety. Phillip said cases take a



Sarah Phillips

Photo belongs to Sarah Phillips

long time to go through. “We should feel safe in our community,” Phillips said.

College students should go for it and talk to many people, Phillips said. There are so many people in the law field, and students do not have to be fearful to speak to people and ask questions, Phillips said.

The first time running was exciting, and one of the things that Phillips did was knocking on thousands of doors and feeling remarkable appreciation for the people. “People like to talk about change until it costs something. It does cost, but if you are dedicated to changing something, you can do it.” Phillips said.

Smith resigned as Benton County Prosecutor on Oct. 9, 2023, after holding his position since 2015. Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders appointed Joshua Robinson as interim prosecuting attorney.

# Chief Justice Race Headed to November Runoff

**Kay King**  
Senior Reporter

Unofficial, preliminary results from Super Tuesday show that justices Rhonda Wood and Karen Baker will head to a runoff election on Nov. 5 to decide the next Chief Justice for the Arkansas Supreme Court.

In preliminary, unofficial returns, Baker captured 27% of the vote and Wood had 26.3%. Both now serve on the Arkansas Supreme Court. Another justice, Barbara Womack Webb, was close behind with 25.9%, but only the top two vote-getters advance to

the runoff. A runoff is required when no individual gets more than 50% of the votes. A fourth candidate, Jay Martin, received 20.6% of the vote. The returns are unofficial until certified by the Arkansas Secretary of State's office. The statistics are from The Associated Press as published on the Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette's website.

Balloting for State Supreme Court Associate Justice, Position 2, shows Courtney Hudson in the lead with 60.33% of the votes and Carlton D. Jones with 39.4%. The two were running to replace Justice Cody Hiland, who was appointed by

Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders, to fill that seat.

Prosecuting Attorney, District 19-West, shows Bryan Sexton in the lead with 55.96% and Sarah Phillips with 44.04% of the votes.

Benton County Election Coordinator Kim Dennison, told the Eagle View, "We vote to elect people into office that are willing to go the extra mile to help our voices be heard. It is important to vote in a Primary Election to help determine who will be on the November Ballot."

## State Supreme Court Chief Justice Position 1



Supreme Court Justice Rhonda Wood



Supreme Court Justice Karen Baker



Jay Martin

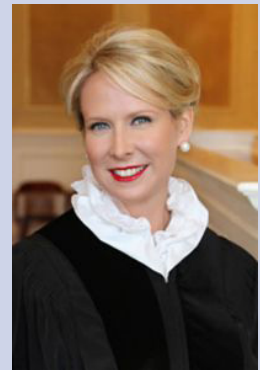


Supreme Court Justice Barbara Womack Webb

## Supreme Court Associate Justice Position 2



Judge Charlton D. Jones



State Supreme Court Justice Courtney Hudson

Photos found on ballotpedia.org.