

NEWS

Galibois and Carey join 2022 race for Cape and Islands district attorney

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Two candidates have officially kicked off their campaigns for Cape and Islands district attorney.

Democrat Robert Galibois and Republican John “Jack” Carey are the first to emerge since Michael O’Keefe, current district attorney, announced he would not seek a sixth term in November’s election to the job he has held since first elected in 2002.

Galibois stood atop the Barnstable County Superior Court steps Monday, his father’s childhood desk poised on the lawn before him. The small, wooden structure held “a lot of meaning,” Galibois said.

“He gave me his boyhood desk when I was a little boy and I wanted to stand behind it because this is one of the biggest professional days of my life,” he said. “I stand here before you today to formally announce my candidacy to be the next district attorney for the Cape and islands.”

Previously: Cape and Islands District Attorney Michael O’Keefe will not seek sixth term

About 15 people attended the announcement as Galibois, 52, reflected on his career — first as a prosecutor from 1995 to 2003 in the Cape and Islands District Attorney’s Office, and as a private practice defense attorney, which includes opening his own practice in 2008.

“In 1995, I arrived on occasion as a volunteer prosecutor in the Cape and Islands district attorney’s office,” he said. “The rich experiences I enjoyed during that time motivated me to return to the DA’s office on a full-time basis.”

Republican John “Jack” Carey formally announced his bid for the office virtually on Zoom video platform Tuesday. Carey, a 30-year retired U.S. Navy captain and a practicing criminal and civil litigation attorney, said his main objective for running is to “keep Cape Cod safe.”

The race: Two candidates step up to the plate in Cape and Islands district attorney race

“Cape Cod is our home and I want to offer my experiences and leadership that I gained from my Naval career and years as a litigator in the Massachusetts courts to ensure the laws are enforced and we keep the Cape and Islands, our home, safe for our families and our children,” Carey said.

Although Carey, who is also a disabled veteran, hasn't yet secured an endorsement from O'Keefe, he said the current district attorney's office has “done a tremendous job,” dealing with a spectrum of issues.

“In my opinion, the actual crime has decreased on the Cape and Islands. As the number is going down, there are issues with abuse, specifically related to drug issues and alcohol abuse,” Carey said. “The alcohol abuse has decreased somewhat because of the pandemic and bars and restaurants being closed. But the drugs issue is ongoing and is something that needs to be addressed. The drug opioid issue here is an ongoing issue that needs to be dealt with. The current district attorney is doing a great job.”

During his announcement, Galibois also addressed “the opioid epidemic” and said he will “maximize efforts” to collaborate with law enforcement and professionals who work on the front lines of the health and mental health care systems.

What does a DA do?: District attorney webinar aims to educate Cape voters

“I will help rebuild the progress that was made to combat the opioid crisis prior to the pandemic by collaborating with the police, dedicated court officials and area professionals,” he said. “I will pursue the creation of a mental health court session dedicated exclusively to working with those facing mental health matters with the goal of helping them access the necessary services that will help them live outside the criminal justice system.”

Another issue that both candidates addressed was non-prosecuting policies that are being considered by district attorney offices across the nation. During U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins' 2018 campaign for Suffolk County District Attorney, she created policy changes on the prosecution of low-level, nonviolent offenses such as disorderly conduct, shoplifting and some drug possession charges.

Although Galibois hasn't yet considered specific “decline-to-prosecute policies,” he said he is considering diverting criminal prosecution of first-time offenders for non-violent offenses.

“My office will be willing to engage those individuals with the appropriate evaluations and extension of community service requirements to avoid a criminal record,” he said.

Galibois also pointed to veterans as a community group that deserves close attention “to the events that bring them into the criminal justice system.”

“A veterans court session, supported by other volunteering veterans can provide a venue where dialogue with those who have been there can bring about true understandings of the issues held by veterans appearing before court,” he said.

For Carey, a Sandwich resident and graduate of Massachusetts Maritime Academy, policies that currently exist under O’Keefe like recovery court and pre-trial diversion are avenues he would consider should he become district attorney.

“We’re going to look at each case individually and then we’ll make a determination whether or not to prosecute at that time,” Carey said. “But we’re going to enforce the law and keep the people of the Cape and islands safe.”

As district attorney races continue to gear up across Massachusetts, candidates have also addressed statistics that show racial disparities in incarceration trends and the criminal justice system overall. According to the Massachusetts Sentencing Commission’s analysis of 2014 data and a report by the Criminal Justice Policy Program at Harvard Law School, the state outpaced national race and ethnicity disparity rates in incarceration — imprisoning Black people at a rate 7.9 times more than white people and Latinx people 4.9 times more than white people.

On a local level, 2021 U.S. Census Bureau data shows that Black people comprise 3.5% of Barnstable County’s population, yet comprise nearly 25% of all pretrial detainees, according to a MassINC 2015 policy brief .

Galibois called the statistics “an outright failure,” and said community engagement surrounding visible topics like the opioid crisis and mental health needs to also extend to racial disparities on a local level.

“This issue is readily addressable through collaboration with prosecutors, law enforcement officials, and community leaders. Awareness is the first step towards finding solutions,” he said. “We have talented law enforcement officials on the Cape as well as local leaders who can effectively address this wide gap.”

Although Carey said he is familiar with the controversy about racial disparities, he believes individuals on Cape are treated equally throughout the local criminal justice system and doesn't see a need for change.

"From what I can see, it's (racial disparities) not an issue on the Cape and the Islands. I think the district attorney here has done a great job. I think it's a justice system for all people. I truly believe that we're treated equally in that regard here on the Cape and Islands."

As Galibois' announcement event came to an end, attendees like Catherine Bumpus said running for district attorney is a "next natural step for Rob."

"It's so great that Rob will run and it's the first time in a very long time that we will have a choice of who we want for district attorney," she said. "I think this is a year where people have spent a lot of time looking at what really matters as they've been sort of locked up in their own worlds. It's time for community engagement and we have so much to talk about and focus on."

Wayne Bergeron, a former Dennis selectman and current member of the Cape Cod Coalition for Safe Communities, said he enjoyed what Galibois said about mental health courts and substance abuse solutions.

"We are very receptive to what he had to say and he strikes me as being progressive, which is what I'm looking for," Bergeron said. "The power of DA is incredibly important, and that position gets to decide how to prosecute, what the charge will be and at what level. All of those things are critical. So he's the kind of guy that I'm very interested in."