

I believe Shelby County residents should be fully informed about every candidate for public office in order to make the right decision when voting. Recently, supporters of my opponent have made accusations of payroll inaccuracies during my employment with the Sheriff's Office as a dispatcher and corrections officer. I am now addressing those accusations. It has been alleged that I was awarded vacation time in violation of union contract. I was hired as a full-time employee by the Shelby County Sheriff's Office on December 29, 2017 as a corrections officer and also worked as a dispatcher when needed. For decades, the administration of the Sheriff's Office awarded employees vacation time on January 1 of each year, rather than on their anniversary date of hire. Sheriff Koonce continued this practice when he was elected. It is a practice that continues today under the current administration and will continue under the current contract until January 1 of 2023. Under the policy of the administration that I worked for, I was required to use my earned 40 hours of vacation time by December 31, 2018 or forfeit it. Because it was impossible to use 40 hours of earned vacation time between December 29th (my anniversary date of hire) and December 31st, I was allowed to cash my earned vacation time on December 14, 2018. On January 1, 2019, every employee of the Sheriff's Office was awarded their vacation time for the following year. If the vacation time was not used by December 31, 2019, it would be forfeited.

During my second year of employment, I was awarded 80 hours of vacation time on January 1, consistent with the policy of my employer. In 2021, following my resignation from the Sheriff's Office, the FOP filed union grievances on behalf of any employee who was denied the benefit of accrued vacation time as defined by the policies and past practices of elected sheriffs dating back to the 1990's. Those grievances are currently being addressed through arbitration proceedings. As an employee, I followed the policies set by my employer. It has also been alleged that on January 2, 2020, I logged into work at 11:28 and logged out at 11:29 but was paid for eight hours.

I have not been shown a copy of the time sheet at issue; however, I know that there was never a day that I worked for only one minute. It is possible that I began my shift on that particular day at 11:28 am and ended at 11:29 pm, was paid for 8 hours and was awarded 4 hours of comp time. I was never informed of any discrepancy on this or any other time sheet and, again, I have not had the opportunity to view this particular time sheet. It has also been alleged that I accumulated more than the 480 hours of compensatory time off allowed by union contract. This is true in one instance. In March of 2020, the COVID pandemic hit and the Sheriff's Office, like many other offices, was short staffed. During that time I was responsible for two jobs: dispatcher and corrections officer and I worked as much as requested and needed by my employer. At that time, paychecks did not reflect the comp, sick, personal and vacation hours accumulated by employees. Once the Sheriff's Office administration calculated that I had earned more than 480 hours of compensatory time off, my hours of work were reduced. According to the Fair Labor Standards Act, additional hours of work, in excess of hours 480 hours, are to be paid as overtime compensation.

Finally, supporters of my opponent have drawn attention to a pending lawsuit filed by a jail inmate. The current and former sheriff are named in the lawsuit together with every corrections officer who worked shifts while the inmate was incarcerated. Because the case is ongoing, I will not comment further.