

Atkins, Lyles run for tax assessor



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Published 1:45 pm Saturday, April 7, 2007

The race for county tax assessor may be small, but it's one of the more important in the upcoming county elections, current Tax Assessor Reynolds Atkins said.

A tax assessor has to be accurate and fair in his evaluations, he said.

"A lot of people don't even know we go out of this office," Atkins said. "We keep very careful tabs on what's going up and coming down. It's very important to know what's going on so we can be fair to the public on all properties."



Atkins' only opponent, Jerry Lyles Jr., said he wanted to make sure property taxes and assessments didn't go any higher than needed.

"I just feel the taxpayers need a voice in that office, someone willing to fight to keep it an affordable rate," Lyles said.

In the last county election, Lyles ran for District 1 supervisor. Soon after the election, Lyles faced charges of election fraud, alleging he registered a convicted felon and two residents who lived in the wrong district.

Lyles pleaded guilty to one charge of completing an application for a voter in the wrong district, and the other charges were dropped. He served one year on probation.

Lyles said he did not think his prior charges would hinder his campaign.

"I put that behind me," he said. "Mistakes were made. I don't think it'll hurt my chances for election this time around. I feel people know who I am, and they know my background. They know I'm capable of representing them if I'm elected to his office."

Atkins and Lyles both said they thought experience was the key to success in the position of tax assessor.

“I’ve had 30 years of tax appraisal experience,” Atkins said. “When this term is up, I will have been tax assessor for 12 years, and I worked for a company that did tax appraisals before that.”

Lyles said he thought his experience in business would help him if he were elected.

“I’ve been in the transportation and logistics business for 22 years, and I deal with taxes and budgeting on a daily basis,” Lyles said. “You have to have really good communication skills and be able to relate to people from all walks of life, which would be a plus.”

Atkins said Lyles’ lack of tax assessment experience worried him more than his prior charges.

Atkins said he was one of the few tax assessors in the state who did their own assessments and didn’t contract out the work. That, in itself, saved the county thousands of dollars a year, he said.

Atkins and Lyles are both running as Democrats.

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