DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA
ASHEVILLE

Roney, Young Sign Anti-Mass Surveillance Pledge, Exposing Rift in Local Races

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ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Mayoral candidate and current city council member Kim Roney, along with city council candidate Keith Young, have signed a pledge affirming constitutional privacy and due process rights, and opposing mass surveillance measures in advance of next month's election. The pledge, developed by the Asheville Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), was sent to all candidates running for Asheville mayor and city council, and those running for Buncombe County commissioner, sheriff, and district attorney. Of these candidates contacted, 2 signed the pledge, 4 declined to sign, and 10 did not respond, including Mayor Esther Manheimer who is running against Roney.

The pledge includes eight specific commitments to uphold constitutional protections against warrantless surveillance, support robust public input and oversight processes for government surveillance decisions, and permanently terminate all contracts with for-profit mass surveillance technology corporations.

"Protecting public safety and protecting constitutional rights are not competing responsibilities," said **City Council Candidate Keith Young**. "Government is obligated to do both.... I believe surveillance decisions require public scrutiny, clearly defined limitations, and meaningful accountability."

Candidates' full responses to the pledge can be found at https://avldsa.org/mass-surveillance/.

Candidates who responded but declined to sign the pledge include:
Asheville: Jeffery Burroughs, city council; Drew Ball, city council
Buncombe County: Anna V. Stearns, county commission; Martin Moore, District Attorney
Candidates who did not respond include:

Asheville: Esther Manheimer, mayor; Maggie Ullman, city council; Antanette Mosley, city council; Shenika Smith, city council
Buncombe County: Quentin Miller, sheriff; Gary Parris, sheriff; Rob Stetson, county commission; Greg Parks, county commission; Lonnie Israel, county commission; Al Whitesides; county commission

The pledge comes amid ongoing local debate over surveillance technology. On August 25, Asheville City Council passed a resolution calling for the City Manager to terminate the city's Flock contract and request removal of its 11 Flock cameras, while allowing future use of Flock technology based on the City Manager's recommendation. Asheville constituents have been vocal about their concerns and have demanded more transparency, accountability, and consideration from elected officials to the threats on civil liberties and privacy that are at stake.

Local officials have drawn the ire of many residents for significant recent expansions of mass surveillance in the area. In May, City Council passed a resolution to accept a $1.14 million federal grant to build a new Real-Time Intelligence Center for the Asheville Police Department, which would use the Axon FUSUS platform. The Buncombe County Sheriff's Office also uses FUSUS for its Real-Time Intelligence Center in addition to its Flock ALPR camera system.

"Constituents recognize that local officials are making a choice," said **Jess Benitez, a chapter member of Asheville DSA.** "Will they use our tax dollars to invest in our communities or will they instead spend it on ineffective and reactionary policing technology?"

Asheville DSA is the local chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America, a grassroots, member-led socialist organization with more than 120,000 members nationally. DSA rejects both capitalism and authoritarianism and believes in using the tools of democracy to advance a system of government where ordinary people have a real voice in our workplaces, neighborhoods, and society.

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