

St. Mary's County Lodge #7
PO Box 1207
Leonardtown, MD 20650

John E O'Connor
Republican Candidate
St Mary's County Commissioner, District 3

Greetings, Brothers and Sisters,

Thank you for inviting me to participate in your candidate process. I sincerely regret that I will be unable to attend due to a prior family commitment. Family has always been and will always be a priority for me.

I recognize and respect the importance of appearing before the membership, and I am truly sorry that circumstances will again prevent me from attending in person. During my successful 2018 campaign for County Commissioner, my responsibilities required me to remain at the scene of a homicide during the scheduled interview. The Lodge graciously allowed me to participate in another way and ultimately supported my candidacy. I remain deeply grateful for that accommodation and for the confidence the membership placed in me. I am equally grateful for the opportunity to submit this statement now.

I understand that this process is about much more than whether a candidate receives an endorsement. It gives new and longtime members alike the opportunity to meet the candidates, ask questions about the issues that affect them, and understand how each candidate would approach the responsibilities of office. I also believe that actions speak louder than words.

I did not receive the Lodge's endorsement during my first campaign in 2014. Nevertheless, throughout my term as County Commissioner from 2014 through 2018, I worked diligently to support the Lodge, the Sheriff's Office, and the men and women who protect our community. Despite the challenges we faced, we worked through them and accomplished things that benefited the membership and, ultimately, the citizens of this county.

When I sought reelection in 2018, the Lodge supported my successful campaign, and I remain sincerely grateful for that confidence. I worked to honor my commitments before and after receiving the endorsement. My voting record and actions in support of the Sheriff's Office, its personnel, and our broader public-safety system provide the clearest, most accountable answers to questions about where I stand and whether I have kept my word.

I recognize that this race presents the membership with a difficult decision. There is a Republican nominee and a Democratic nominee, and there may also be an unaffiliated candidate on the general-election ballot. Each candidate brings a different level of experience and a distinct record for the membership to consider.

Public voting records are always examined carefully. Where no such record exists, I understand that the membership must weigh each candidate's words, experience, judgment, and ability to fulfill the commitments made. I respectfully ask that my record, including my votes, actions, relationships, and years of support for the membership, be considered the most reliable evidence I can offer of where I stand.

I appreciate that there may be no simple or perfect answer. Whatever decision the Lodge reaches, my commitment will remain unchanged. I do not need your endorsement to support you. I never have and never will.

That does not mean that I would not deeply appreciate the Lodge's endorsement, and I would be genuinely grateful and humbled to receive it. But that endorsement is not, and will never be, a condition of my support for you, your families, the Sheriff's Office, or those who work alongside you to protect this community.

There is something to be said for a person who truly understands the sacrifices demanded by public service and honors those sacrifices through actions, not simply words. My understanding comes from my own public and military service, my wife's service, and the service of my grandfather and father as law enforcement officers. That history has shaped how I view those who commit themselves to protecting and serving others.

Every day, the members of Lodge No. 7 and your families give more to this community than most people will ever fully understand. When you bring a need to county government, big or small, it must be considered in the full context of what you and your families sacrifice every day.

You place the community first. I believe county leadership and its elected body have a responsibility to place those who protect that community, and the needs of their families, among its highest priorities. That is how I have always tried to operate, and it is what I sincerely believe.

Our responsibility to care for those who sacrifice so much does not end when a member retires. Too often, retirees are overlooked even as the cost of living rises and benefits established years ago remain unchanged. The value of a person's service and sacrifice does not diminish simply because that service occurred many years ago. Those who devoted their careers to protecting this community should be able to rely on a retirement that continues to provide dignity and financial security.

We must examine responsible ways to help retiree benefits keep pace with today's cost of living. We must also review the percentages used to calculate retirement benefits and safeguard the long-term sustainability of the entire retirement system. That examination must be financially responsible, but it must also honestly recognize that the current percentages may not adequately reflect the sacrifices members make throughout their careers. Supporting today's membership is incomplete if we fail to honor and care for those who served before them.

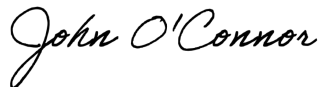
I believe this election is critically important not only to the future of our county, but also to the long-term sustainability of the services we provide to our citizens and our ability to help the Sheriff's Office reach its goals and objectives.

We have made meaningful progress from where the department was in 2014 to where it is today in compensation, equipment, and budgeting. That progress belongs to the many people who worked together to achieve it, particularly the dedicated members of Lodge No. 7. There is still more work to be done.

Whether or not I receive the Lodge's endorsement, you will continue to have my respect, my gratitude, and my support. That commitment is neither political nor transactional. It is personal, it is rooted in service, and it will not change based on the outcome of an endorsement process or an election.

Thank you for your service to our community and for the sacrifices you and your families make. I humbly ask for the opportunity to continue working alongside you, and I would be honored to serve you and all the people of our county as your next Republican County Commissioner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John O'Connor". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

John E O'Connor