

Coroner Robert West explains his endorsement of Debbie Wilkey:

Retiring Kootenai County Coroner Dr. Robert West, who has held the position since 1984, has endorsed Deputy Coroner Debbie Wilkey in the race. Wilkey faces Coeur d'Alene's former police chief, Tom Cronin, and surgeon Dr. Douglas Stafford in the Republican primary, and Chief Deputy Coroner Jody DeLuca Hissong in the general election.

"I think that all four candidates are qualified," West said, but he added, "I think that Deb Wilkey has the educational expertise and experience and dedication to carry on the office of coroner responsibilities. I think all four candidates are technically qualified and each of the other candidates brings a certain level of expertise, but I think that all around, Deb Wilkey is the best choice."

When asked why he chose to endorse at all, West said, "Three months ago, I would have chosen to stay completely out of it. But my feeling is that the coroner's job is a 'full-time, boots on the ground' requirement. You've got to be committed to getting up at 2 o'clock in the morning and driving to wherever it is - Plummer or Harrison or Athol. That requires a lot of commitment and it also requires people that have demonstrated working relationships with law enforcement and with funeral homes and with the public. You can't run the coroner's office from your desk and you can't run it from home. I'm not law enforcement and I'm not the prosecutor. It's my job to speak for the deceased, the victims, and the only way you can do that is if you're willing to get out of bed. You have to be there. It's not something that will wait until 8 o'clock the next morning."