

Happ running for state attorney general

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JEFFERSON — Jefferson County District Attorney Susan Happ is running for state attorney general.

She filed paperwork with the state Government Accountability Board on Wednesday indicating she intends to run for the office.

Happ is perhaps best known for the successful 2009 prosecution of Edward Edwards, the Ohio drifter who murdered Fort Atkinson teenagers Timothy Hack and Kelly Drew in August 1980.

She told the Daily Union Thursday that she would not be issuing any formal statement about this filing.

When she announced that she was considering running in December, Happ had told members of the press that she would not deal with campaign matters during her regular work hours as Jefferson County District Attorney.

Happ's run sets up a three-way Democratic primary for attorney general. Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne and state Rep. Jon Richards of Milwaukee are already in the race.

Waukesha County District Attorney Brad Schimel is the only Republican in the race so far. Incumbent Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen, a Republican, has decided not to seek re-election.

“Wisconsin deserves an attorney general who will bring justice to victims of crime, protect consumers and working families and will be a leader in bringing our state together,” Happ said in December when she confirmed that she was considering a run for the state’s top cop. “As the district attorney of Jefferson County, I’ve worked with Democrats and Republicans to prosecute offenders, protect our families and keep our communities safe, As a mother and a rural Democrat with Wisconsin values, I want to ensure we have the best candidate to take over the attorney general’s office in November.”

Happ first was elected as district attorney in 2008, defeating Republican Peter Tempelis, who was endorsed by Van Hollen. She was re-elected last year without opposition.

Born and raised in Jefferson, Happ earned a bachelor’s degree in Russian and journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1994 and graduated from the UW-Madison Law School in 1998.

She returned to Jefferson to practice law at Monogue & Witt until starting her own firm in 2005. Also, prior to graduation, she served as a law clerk for the Jefferson County Circuit Court judges.

Throughout the past 17 years, including time in law school and as district attorney, Happ has been focused primarily on criminal law, handling juvenile delinquency matters, felony, misdemeanor and criminal traffic charges.

In addition, while in her own practice, she had done quite a bit of work as guardian ad litem in CHIPS (Child In Need of Protection or Services) proceedings, typically in cases where the children are abused or neglected and even in guardianship proceedings.

She noted that her practice was not limited to Jefferson County, with clients taking her from Outagamie County to Rock County and everywhere in between.

Happ has been involved in the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce, Jefferson Rotary Club, Jefferson County Bar Association, State Bar of Wisconsin and local scholarship committees for Jefferson High School students.

She serves on the board of directors and as legal counsel for Tomorrow's Hope, a local nonprofit organization targeting life-limiting illnesses.

Statewide, Happ might best known for the successful 2009 prosecution of Edward Edwards, the Ohio drifter who murdered Fort Atkinson teenagers Timothy Hack and Kelly Drew in August 1980.