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Shannon would target predators, gangs as Va. AG

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Shannon says that if attorney general, he plans to more aggressively target predators and gangs.

Democrat from Northern Virginia, said public safety is what inspired him to leave private practice, become a Fairfax County prosecutor, run for the House of Delegates and now to pursue statewide office.

"My calling is public safety. And the reason why years ago I took a six-figure pay cut to

become a local prosecutor, the reason why I volunteered for an assignment that most prosecutors don't want to volunteer for, which was prosecuting cases involving young children who have been the victims of violent crimes, is because I believe my calling is public safety," Mr. Shannon said during an interview this week with editors and reporters at The Washington Times.

The attorney general's office has jurisdiction over certain types of cases, including cases resulting from computer crimes, but the emphasis Mr. Shannon said he would place on prosecutions would mark a shift in the priorities of the office. Virginia's attorney general primarily represents and provides legal advice to the state government, including the governor, the General Assembly and various agencies, boards and commissions.

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child pornography.

He added that the attorney general's office needs to use its resources to more effectively coordinate and contribute to other prosecutions.

Mr. Shannon said the office can take a larger, more holistic approach to fighting gangs and drugs statewide and regionally without spending more money by better coordinating with other agencies and with expanded participation from the public and private sectors.

He said he would work to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, but saw no need for more restrictions on law-abiding gun owners.

"I believe in the Second Amendment," he said. "We need to defend the rights of individuals to bear arms. It is a constitutional right and like all the rights in the Constitution, the attorney general needs to protect those rights."

While he supports the death penalty, Mr. Shannon said he never voted against a death penalty bill during his time in the General Assembly.

"I don't think we are a bloodthirsty society," he said. "Capital punishment needs to be reserved for the worst offenders, and it needs to be an option in Virginia."

Mr. Shannon said the federal government has failed to enforce or effectively revamp the country's immigration laws, but the involvement of the state in enforcing those laws should be limited to immigrants who commit crimes.

He said same-sex couples should have health insurance options and legal protections allowing them to make medical decisions for each other, but he does not support civil unions or same-sex marriage -- both prohibited by a constitutional amendment in Virginia.

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