

## Arkadelphia attorney appointed to head state Democratic Party



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By Joe Phelps  
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Arkadelphia, Ark. -

Todd Turner, a 16-year resident of Arkadelphia, was appointed Wednesday by Gov. Mike Beebe to take the seat of the state's Democratic Party chairman.

Turner, an attorney, graduated from Ouachita Baptist University in 1988 with bachelor's degrees in political science and communication. A native of De Queen, Turner would return home and work as a reporter for the De Queen Bee, the town's newspaper.

He did this for two summers and became interested in politics. He attended law school at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, where graduated in 1992. After working for a chancery judge in Little Rock, he returned to Arkadelphia to practice law.

While practicing law is his profession, politics still remain a special interest of Turner's. He got his start while attending OBU, where he was involved with the Young Democrats group. Turner recalled when former President Bill Clinton was campaigning for his first presidential campaign.

"Their offices were right across the street from the law school campus," he said. After beginning his career in law, he was involved in the Clark County Democratic Committee throughout the 1990s, and replaced Dr. David Luck as chairman of the Democratic Party in the county. He served as chairman for 10 years until Dr. Tommy Roebuck was elected chair in 2008. Turner is still on the committee.

"I think once again this recognizes the fact that the Democratic Party is extremely active in Clark County," Roebuck said. "From the 10 years he was chair, this recognizes his ability as a leader. I am tremendously pleased that the governor made this very wise choice. He'll do a great job, and this will bring us more recognition. We're all extremely proud of him."

Turner will replace U.S. Sen. David Pryor, who has served as interim chairman since Bill Gwatney was fatally shot in Little Rock in August.

"I considered (Gwatney)a friend," Turner said. "He was a great chairman of the state party. He was very enthusiastic and hard working. Gwatney was a really fine person."

Turner said he looks forward to working with Beebe and other elected officials and staff members in the Democratic Party.

Though Turner has a new title, he noted that he will not be moving to another office. "I'm not moving. And I'm not relocating to an office in Little Rock."

Turner, 42, is married to Becca Turner and has two children: a 7-year-old son, Cannon, and a 9-year-old daughter, Harper. Both are enrolled in the Arkadelphia School District, and the family attends Third Street Baptist Church. Turner is also involved in local civic organizations, including the Arkadelphia Football Club.

Turner successfully challenged the state's payday lending law in November. The Arkansas Supreme Court reversed an appeal involving Turner and Little Rock Circuit Judge Barry Sims, ruling that the 1999 Arkansas Check-Cashers Act is unconstitutional. Under the act, some payday loan offices were charging up to 300 percent interest — and some even up to 800 percent — on loans. Turner and a Little Rock plaintiff filed suit in 2003, and Sims ruled the act constitutional.

The suit went through three trials, all of which were appealed on various technicalities, before the act was deemed unlawful in 2008.

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