

Conservative attorney's book offers different ideas

Swindle gives insight on the judicial system

BY DONNY KARR
THE TIMES-GEORGIAN

A book released by a Carrollton defense attorney was listed as the number one bestseller on Amazon.com's list of Trial Practice books in its first two weeks of publication.

Jason Swindle, a criminal defense attorney in Carrollton, said his book, "The Verdict Is In: Fix the Criminal Justice System," offers a unique look into the changes being discussed in the political arena regarding Georgia's judicial system.

"About 90 percent of criminal defense attorneys consider themselves to be very liberal," said Swindle. "I'm a conservative and the topics I wrote about in the book are things that are not usually discussed by conservative lawyers and lawmakers. It's a very right-wing, conservative look at our judicial system, but it's also

a common sense look at what needs to be done to fix it."

Swindle, who has handled more than 5,000 legal cases as a defense attorney, said he noticed thousands of cases in which current laws are not effective in dealing with offenders.

"Our state has traditionally been very tough on drug offenders, but these offenders are constantly in and out of the correctional system," said Swindle. "In the book, I talk about taking a new approach to these offenders who are accused of non-violent offenses."

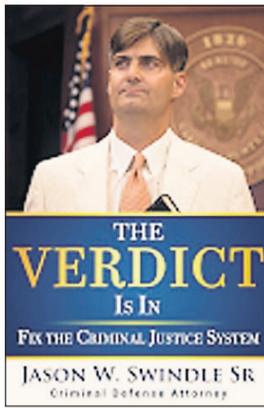
His views on non-violent drug offenders are consistent with views held by many left-wing politicians and legal experts. Swindle notes that the sentiment toward marijuana use is leading to legalization efforts across the country that could play a

significant role in improving the judicial system.

"If you look at the states who have legalized marijuana, they are taxing the sales of it and now they are starting to bring in quite a bit of money that the state can use," said Swindle. "I'm not saying we need to legalize marijuana in Georgia, but we do need to rethink the laws related to it."

Swindle suggests rewriting laws in order to lessen the harshness for those who are arrested for using or possessing small amounts of marijuana. He believes the penalty should be more similar to receiving a traffic citation.

"In the cases I have dealt with related to marijuana, it has not led anyone to act violently," said Swindle. "In the cases I've handled related to alcohol, it's much different. Alcohol has been involved in many violent incidents."



He also discusses in his book the issues surrounding capital punishment and calls for laws to be adjusted so that it saves the state time and money. Swindle says that, under current law, those sentenced to the death penalty are being held too long before execution.

"In general, I'm for the death penalty," said Swindle. "As of right now, it costs us way too much money to enforce and it takes too long. I'm calling for lawmakers to completely do away with the

death penalty as it is written and rewrite it so that it makes sense."

Swindle says the book has been a project that has spanned nearly a decade in writing and getting published. He said that he interviewed Gov. Nathan Deal years ago and spoke about many of the topics discussed in the book.

He said the book is one that can be read in just a few hours.

"It's less than 100 pages long, so anyone can read it, or skim over it in a very short time,"

said Swindle. "The basic premise of the book is to help our government save money," said Swindle. "There's so much money being wasted on enforcing drug laws and other legal issues that have been on the books for years. Georgia is a conservative state, and for a long time, we've seen politicians run on the idea of being tough on crime. I'm saying that it's time for us to start being smart on crime."

The book is available for purchase on Amazon.com in paperback or Kindle.

SCHOOLS

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

determines the amount of funding each school receives.

"This is a major shift from the method used in the Quality Basic Education formula," said Dr. Kent Edwards, superintendent of Carrollton City Schools. "Instead of funding full-time equivalents based on instructional segments, the proposed formula will use student enrollment counts as a way of funding purpose. It really then comes down to giving a great deal of local control and flexibility with money to meet the needs of your students in your system."

Edwards was appointed to the education reform commission's 10-person funding subcommittee by Deal earlier this year. He said the proposal before the funding committee is the development of a student-based funding formula that consists of three components,

student-based funding, student characteristics and categorical grants.

"It's a completed process," said Edwards. "One of the major concerns among superintendents and boards of education is that the austerity cuts had created a system that was underfunding schools in the state of Georgia. The education reform commission's funding formula subcommittee brought forth a recommendation today that \$267 million be added across the state of Georgia."

If the new formula is adopted, Carrollton City Schools would receive an extra \$900,000 per year.

Carroll County Schools, a much larger system than Carrollton, would take in nearly \$2 million in extra funds. The subcommittee's recommendation has to

be approved by the entire funding commission before it will go through the governor's office and then on to the general assembly.

"Recommendation will go before the entire Reform Commission on Nov. 19," said Edwards.

"It really then comes down to giving a great deal of local control and flexibility with money to meet the needs of your students in your system."

—Dr. Kent Edwards
superintendent,
Carrollton City Schools

funding for early education. It's something that will benefit education and elevate our ability to have a higher quality education. This is going to be exciting if it keeps going down the predicted path in which the General Assembly will support it entirely."



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