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Sheriff faces challenge: Rep. Donelan, former Montague Selectman Voudren to run in primary against Macdonald

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A primary contest is shaping up for the Franklin County sheriff's job, even though the election is more than a year away, with state Rep. Christopher Donelan announcing Thursday that he plans to forsake a re-election bid and instead challenge three-term incumbent Frederick Macdonald.

Donelan -- who is a four-term Democratic legislator from Orange -- is a former police officer in Orange and South Hadley and a former probation officer. In the Legislature, he is vice chairman of the House Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security, overseeing all legislation pertaining to police, fire, emergency medical services and corrections, including county jails and houses of correction.

'I've always had a passion for public safety,' he said. 'This is an opportunity to return to that line of work. As a kid, my dream was to be a police officer.'

Donelan's announcement creates what is likely to be a three-way Democratic primary race, which also includes Ed Voudren of Turners Falls. The 53-year-old former Montague selectman and police officer, who was a former police chief in Shelburne, also worked in the sheriff's department under Macdonald's predecessor, Donald McQuade.

Voudren, who now is head of security for an area private school, said he wants to bring 30 years of experience of law enforcement -- including years as a narcotics officer -- to help 'reform the sheriff's department, by improving officer selection and training, increasing cooperation with local police and expanding the department's efforts to stop drug trafficking countywide.'

Although the three Democrats have said they are running, the process doesn't formally open until next year with circulation of nomination papers to get on next fall's primary ballot.