

Interview with Tim Stringham, 2024 Candidate for Maricopa County Recorder

By Clay Latimer, March 2024

Tim Stringham It was a routine moment, as political campaigns go, but it sums up why Tim Stringham decided to run for Maricopa County recorder. During a recent parade in Gilbert, the 35-year-old Afghan War veteran was mingling with voters when a man in the crowd started taunting him. Instead of ignoring his cracks about Democrats, Stringham approached the man and started a conversation. "When I told him I was an Afghan War veteran, he said: "'Well, I bet you're the only one.' I turned around and said, "There are three other veterans. That guy, that guy, and that girl all served.

They're Democrats. "Republicans are forever waving the flag and telling us they're the Patriotic Party - and that we're weak in comparison. "Well, I'm pretty tired of being told that these people are patriotic. If I have a campaign theme, it's this: 'It's undemocratic to limit the right to vote.' I'm gonna flip the script on them."

Stringham brings a strong resume to the race. A fifth-generation Arizona, he served in the U.S. Army and Navy and attended Arizona State and Notre Dame Law School. His likely opponent is Republican incumbent Steve Richer, who faces nominal primary opposition. The county recorder is responsible for early voting and voter registration and helps run local, state, and federal elections.

Until recently, it was a sleepy, uneventful post. But the script flipped with Donald Trump's lie that the 2020 election was rigged, triggering the Jan 6 insurrection and Republican assaults on voting rights. In the run-up to the 2022 midterms, election workers in Arizona faced more than 100 violent threats and intimidating messages. "You'll be executed," wrote one: "Wire around their limbs and tied and dragged by a car," wrote another.

Voters in Democratic-leaning districts were also targeted, encountering armed extremists in tactical gear at many drop-box spots. At the statehouse, Republican lawmakers put Arizona at the center of the fight to make voting harder, using false claims about voter fraud to justify submitting more than 100 bills to restrict ballot access.

Meanwhile, Trump and his allies continue to stoke distrust in the elemental act of any democracy - the casting and tabulating of ballots for public office. "I've never been in politics before, but the people who complained the elections are rigged are Republicans, right?" Stringham said.

"They're saying the election was rigged by Democrats. But the claims were investigated by Republicans, and they found nothing there. The claims were thrown out by Republican-appointed judges. This led to death threats - by Republicans.

And by the way, the person protecting against those threats was a Democratic sheriff. "I don't think the office should ever be partisan. But I think it's also very clear that Democrats are the ones in favor of everybody's voting rights. Not Republicans. That is what makes me a Democrat. I'm running for Maricopa County Recorder to protect our elections. " Public service has long appealed to Stringham.

Born in Yuma, he went to high school in Tempe, where he met his future wife. After ASU, he did what Stringham men typically do: He joined the army, serving in Afghanistan in 2012. "My great-grandfather, grandfather, and father all served," he said. Then it was on to Notre Dame Law School, an ideal landing spot after Afghanistan. "I'm hanging out I'm drinking beer and watching football. And it was just about

the best three years of my life - a real healing, cathartic time of growth," he said. "Coming out of law school everybody was talking about joining this firm or that firm and doing this or that. "We decided we needed a new adventure. So Stringham joined the Navy as an attorney in the Judge Advocate General's Corps in Africa and the Middle East.

When he moved back to Tempe in 2022, Democratic leaders recruited Stringham to run for recorder, arguably the most dangerous job in politics. Just ask Richer, who promised to make the job boring again when he beat Adrian Fontes in 2020

Instead, technical problems in ballot recording machines during the 2022 midterms created havoc in a fifth of the county's polling places. Richer's staunch defense of the system infuriated Republican election deniers, who subjected him to death threats, baseless allegations, and conspiracy theories. "Boy, did he fail if his goal was to make the election boring," Stringham said. "We have a huge gulf between us. I have huge criticisms of how he's conducted himself in past campaigns."

As recorder, Stringham's priorities would include protecting election workers, one-day voter registration, and creating an automatic voter registration system. In many ways, he's been preparing for this moment for years. "I was on active duty in the United States Navy on January 6, 2021. I watched for three hours as protesters ransacked our Nation's Capitol and my Commander in Chief said nothing. "Later, I learned that fake electoral votes were submitted from my home state of Arizona to overturn the national election results.

"Serving in the military has been the greatest honor of my life, but the greatest threat to democracy isn't a foreign power, it's politicians at home who are willing to peddle lies and conspiracies to get elected, or who try and pick and choose who gets to vote to ensure their election. "That's why I'm running for Maricopa County Recorder."