



## Democrats lead Republicans in races for several Maricopa County offices in early results

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A Democratic leader in Maricopa County says early election results show how the county is leading the way in turning Arizona blue.

Eight of ten elected county positions currently have a Democrat leading in early results for Tuesday's election, some in roles long held by Republicans.

The county assessor, board of supervisors, recorder and treasurer were on the ballot. The county sheriff and attorney were also on the ballot.

All five county supervisors ran to keep their seat, and some of their challengers are in the lead, according to early results:

- District 1: Democrat Jevin Hodge leads Republican incumbent Jack Sellers.
- District 2: Incumbent Steve Chucri, a Republican, leads Democrat Deedra Abboud.
- District 3: Democrat Whitney Walker leads Republican incumbent Bill Gates.
- District 4: Incumbent Clint Hickman, a Republican, leads Democrat Suzanne Story.
- District 5: Democrat Steve Gallardo ran unopposed.

Also in early results:

- Democrat Aaron Connor leads appointed county assessor Eddie Cook, a Republican.
- Democrat Adrian Fontes, the current county recorder, leads Republican Steven Richer.
- For treasurer, Democrat Daniel Toporek leads Republican state lawmaker John Allen.

The first rounds of results in Maricopa County include votes from about 1.5 million early ballots. Still to come are full results from in-person voting Tuesday. Results from early ballots dropped off at the polls on Tuesday, other early ballots and provisional ballots will come later in the week.

There are 2,595,272 registered voters in the county for this election.

Most of the elected positions in the county are held by Republicans, and some elected positions have lacked Democratic candidates in past elections.

This year, though, as Arizona is eyed nationally as a swing state that could vote for a Democratic president for the first time since choosing Bill Clinton over Bob Dole in 1996, all of the county Republicans on the ballot faced Democratic challengers.

On seeing early results Tuesday, Maricopa County Democratic Party Chairman Steven Slugocki said the county "is going to lead the way to Arizona turning blue."

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"This is something that we could have never dreamed of, even a few years ago," Slugocki said. "And here we are. This is an emotional night for me."

Democratic county candidates told The Republic Tuesday night it is clear that county residents want a change and were disappointed with county officials' response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Assessor's Office determines the value of properties in Maricopa County, which dictates how much a property owner pays in taxes.

The Board of Supervisors appointed Cook to the role in February after Paul Petersen resigned after being indicted for an alleged illegal international child adoption scheme.

Both candidates say they are looking to restore public trust that was lost during the Petersen scandal. Both candidates also say Petersen's resignation opened the Assessor's Office to scrutiny that revealed problems with staffing, technology and transparency they want to fix.

Aaron Connor is the first Democrat on the ballot for the role since 1992. He is a first-time political candidate who has spent his career in the mortgage and technology industries.

He says he believes in "transparency, fairness, accuracy and trust," and he believes the office needs a leader with a background in real estate.

After seeing early results Tuesday, Connor said he was pleased with his lead.

"It's important to be really humble and optimistic," he said. "I'm sure it's going to tighten."

Connor said the fact that Democrats down the ballot did well shows that people don't believe Republicans have handled COVID-19 well. He said the county's Democratic candidates are motivated.

"I think we are ripe for change," he said.

Cook is a former Gilbert council member and a technology account manager for NetApp, a technology company that provides cloud-based data services.

He said he wants to improve the culture of the assessor's office, restructure it to be more efficient, and provide more transparency on property valuation.

## **Maricopa County Board of Supervisors**

The supervisors set the county's budget and make decisions on issues such as the environment, land use, public health and transportation.

COVID-19 has put the office in the spotlight in recent months and brought criticism from both sides as the supervisors made decisions on the county's mask mandate and how to spend federal coronavirus relief funds.

Challengers say the incumbents didn't act quickly and strongly enough to try to protect public health and jobs as the virus spread across the county this summer, while incumbents say they made the best, measured decisions they could at the time.

### **District 1**

District 1 includes the southeastern region of the county, including parts of Ahwatukee Foothills, Chandler, Gilbert, Mesa, Queen Creek and Tempe.

Sellers has served on the board since February 2019 and said he will focus on how the county can maintain and improve its quality of life through better planning, recruitment of high-paying jobs and investment in infrastructure.

Seeing early results showing Hodge in the lead, Sellers said the race wasn't over yet.

"I was surprised at the initial results," he said. "But it's not over."

Hodge, a Democrat who is running for political office for the first time, is the national engagement director for LINK Strategic Partners. He said the county needs to invest more in local businesses and education.

Hodge said he was confident about the early results, but he wasn't calling the race. He said it was an honor to see the votes he received.

He believes the results show that Maricopa County voters are ready for a change that improves their health, wellness, safety, security and economic future.

"Maricopa County voters have spoken," he said.

### **District 2**

District 2 includes the northeastern part of the county, including parts of Apache Junction, Carefree, Cave Creek, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation Reservation, Fountain Hills, Gilbert, Mesa, Paradise Valley, Phoenix, Scottsdale and Salt River Reservation.

Chucuri has been a county supervisor since 2012. His priority if re-elected will be making sure the county has a "forward vision" as it continues to grow.

Abboud has been a civil rights and social justice advocate, attorney and small-business owner. She wants to help improve the county's infrastructure, address conflicts of interest on the current Board of Supervisors and improve residents' accessibility to the board.

### **District 3**

District 3 covers the north-central part of the county, including parts of Anthem, Desert Hills, New River, Phoenix and Paradise Valley.

Gates, who has served as a supervisor since 2017, said his priorities will be economic development as the county comes out of COVID-19 and smart growth.

Walker, the former director of public policy and communications for Protecting Arizona's Family Coalition, said she plans to focus on education, stabilizing the county's economy, supporting small businesses and expanding access to health care.

#### **District 4**

District 4 covers the northwestern part of the county, including parts of Avondale, Buckeye, El Mirage, Glendale, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, Peoria, Sun City, Sun City West, Surprise, Wickenburg and Youngtown.

Hickman, a supervisor since 2013, said his priorities include continuing to plan for the incredible growth the county is seeing, and enticing great companies and higher-paying jobs.

Story is a 20-year high school English teacher. She is dedicated to equity, transparency, responsible stewardship of resources and honest communication, according to her campaign website.

#### **Maricopa County recorder**

The Recorder's Office helps the supervisors oversee the county's elections, along with recording, tracking and providing public access to documents such as deeds and property maps.

Fontes said Tuesday night he was happy with the initial results showing him in the lead. He said the Democratic-leaning results down the ballot show county voters want a different type of governance.

"I think everyone in public office should take notice immediately," he said.

Both Fontes and Richer have a background in law and public policy.

Fontes is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, and served as a prosecutor with the Denver District Attorney's Office, Maricopa County Attorney's Office and the Arizona Attorney General's Office before transitioning to the private sector.

Fontes said he wants to continue making it easier to vote, collaborating with others to run the county's elections and ensuring the voting process is safe from hackers.

Richer is a lawyer for Lewis Roca Rothgerber Christie in downtown Phoenix. Richer previously worked in business management and public policy, including for think tanks such as American Enterprise Institute and the Cato Institute.

Richer says he stands for "fair and competent elections" and wants voters to "have confidence in the voting process."

The treasurer's office sends out property tax bills and collects and disburses the county's tax revenue.

Allen has spent the past two decades working in politics, while Toporek is a first-time political candidate.

Allen defeated the current treasurer, Royce Flora, in the August primary. He was first elected to the state Legislature in 2002 and has spent 11 of the past 17 years in the Arizona House of Representatives, including two years as Republican majority leader.

He said he would like to make the Treasurer's Office more user-friendly and foster better cross-county collaboration, so that issues, like the high-profile tax dispute that nearly led to a veteran losing his mobile home, are avoided from the start.

Toporek retired from the military last year and moved back to Maricopa County, where he grew up.

He served as the Army National Guard aviation training officer and as the Arizona National Guard Command chief warrant officer.

He said there is an opportunity to make the office better and more transparent. He believes the office needs enhanced collaboration with other counties and better morale within the office.