

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Who is running for Maricopa County recorder? Fontes faces two Republican challengers

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Two Republicans are looking to unseat Maricopa County Recorder Adrian Fontes this election cycle.

The recorder's office oversees voter registration and early voting and maintains the recorded documents for the county.

Fontes, who assumed office after a fumbled presidential preference election in 2016 by the former county recorder pledged to simplify the voting process and eradicate long wait times.

He has mostly accomplished that, though during the first major election he oversaw in August 2018, voter check-in equipment was not properly installed at 62 polling places, leaving voters unable to secure ballots in the morning hours.

The incident caused the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors to take over some oversight of the elections process.

Fontes, who is a Democrat, has become a punching bag for Republicans who have questioned whether his election policies have disproportionately favored Democrat candidates.

Fontes has asserted that all of his policies aim to enhance voter access — regardless of a voter's political affiliation.

The primary election will be Aug. 4. Early voting and vote-by-mail begin July 8.

One Republican and one Democrat will move on to the general election on Nov. 3.

Stephen I. Richer (R)

Stephen Richer is a lawyer in downtown Phoenix.

He previously worked in business management and public policy, including for think tanks like American Enterprise Institute and the Cato Institute.

He's participated in the board of the Arizona Humanities, the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Federalist Society's Phoenix Lawyers Chapter.

The Arizona Republican Party asked Richer to conduct an independent review of the recorder's office after criticism that Fontes operated the November 2018 election to favor Democrats.

On his [campaign website](#), Richer said he believes the problems and concerns about Fontes and his favoritism toward his own party still exist.

His priorities include ensuring the recorder's office is not influenced by politics and making sure all voters are treated the same, regardless of political affiliation. He also wants to eradicate hours-long lines on election day and make the voting process more transparent, according to his campaign website.

Clair Van Steenwyk (R)

Clair Van Steenwyk, who goes by Van, is a retired political talk show host and longtime member of the Republican party.

According to his [campaign website](#), he served as a precinct and state committeeman in Legislative District 22. Van Steenwyk has also served as a delegate at state Republican conventions.

Van Steenwyk worked at a number of companies as a business executive and entrepreneur and founded a Christian Halfway and Coffee House in Bellflower, California, with his wife.

He started his AM radio political talk show in 2003 called "Crosswords with Van." He's since retired.

Van Steenwyk said on his website that the county's voting system "is not trusted and must be updated and run like a business rather than a political football."

He said he decided to run for office after helping many others get elected and watching them not keep their pledges to voters.

Adrian P. Fontes (D)

Recorder Adrian Fontes was elected in 2016, defeating longtime Republican incumbent Helen Purcell.

Fontes is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, where he served on active duty from 1992 to 1996. When he returned, he pursued a law degree.

He has served as a prosecutor with the Denver district attorney's office, Maricopa County Attorney's Office and the Arizona Attorney General's Office. He then transitioned to the private sector.

On his [campaign website](#), Fontes said he's spent his first term rebuilding trust in the county's election system and focusing on enhanced voter experience, accountability and security.

He said on the website that his continued goal is to "make sure that every Maricopa County citizen who is eligible to vote is able to vote, whether at their kitchen table completing their early ballot or at the booth on election day, and that all of their ballots are counted."