

Chairman's Speech

I want to thank my fellow Board members for placing their trust in me to lead Maricopa County during a very difficult period. It is truly an honor.

A lot of the credit for where I am today goes to my wife, Marie, who passed away 8 years ago. In her final days she made me promise that I would be ok and continue to serve our community. My children, Jack, Eric & Shannon, (my son Eric is here with us today) have also encouraged me every step of the way. They want me to be happy and continue to stay active in the things I love. I have found that serving my community is the thing I love to do and I want to help prepare us for an even stronger future.

It's great to serve on a Board with such outstanding colleagues and all of us benefit from the immensely talented and dedicated staff at Maricopa County.

Joy Rich has built a team of highly knowledgeable professionals who help this Board succeed every day.

So where do we go from here? Well, I have thoughts on that.

Today, there is no greater threat to public health and safety than the COVID-19 Pandemic. Over the last year, I have watched as our whole nation has been shaken to its core. Lives lost, businesses closed and families unable to afford food, clothing and shelter. I believe it is incumbent upon all elected leaders to use those tools available to us to help stop the suffering.

That starts with tracking and slowing the spread of the disease itself. Under the leadership of Director Flanagan and Dr. Sunenshine, Maricopa County has provided up-to-date guidance so individuals, families, businesses, schools, health care providers, and elected officials can make informed decisions to protect themselves and protect precious health care resources. All of this occurred in alignment with CDC best practices and in partnership with the State. I believe science-backed mitigation efforts

recommended by Public Health and supported by this Board have saved lives.

Now we are entering a new phase of the pandemic. Vaccinations have started, but it will be months until there is enough vaccine for everyone. My office will look to expand our efforts to educate on facts, especially when it comes to the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines. The critics are loud; we will be louder. We will continue to lead based on science and common sense. The faster we as a County, a State and a Nation can beat this virus, the faster we can secure a brighter future for all Americans.

This crisis is not just impacting peoples' health, it is putting a strain on families and businesses. This Board took immediate and aggressive action to ease the pain of our citizens. I want to thank Assistant County Manager, Lee Ann Bohn and Human Services Director Bruce Liggett for taking the Board's direction and implementing targeted, successful assistance programs. To date, we have provided \$5 million to non-profit organizations and \$70 million in

small business assistance. It is important to keep business doors open so they can serve their customers and keep their employees on the payroll.

Our Rental Utility Assistance Program is helping to keep families in their homes. More than four thousand households received assistance paying utility bills and more than six thousand households received help paying their rent.

Protecting the most vulnerable and those most impacted is not just the right thing to do, IT IS OUR JOB!

That is why we must also lead on the issue of homelessness.

The 2020 Point-in-Time count showed more than 7,400 people in our county experiencing homelessness, with approximately half of those unsheltered.

That number will likely be larger in 2021.

Because of the pandemic, some people are relying on the social safety net for the first time in their lives. Without our help they too could become homeless.

Maricopa County continually works to be part of the solution, and I'm especially grateful for the strong voice and leadership of Supervisor Gallardo. Steve, I look forward to working with you on this important county-wide issue.

This Board dedicated \$12 million of our CARES Act funds to move people off the streets, set up safer outdoor space, provide temporary overnight shelters and assuring medical care for our most vulnerable.

Further, this Board has committed dollars to continue our support for those experiencing homelessness in 2021.

I believe we need even more investment and focus on this issue. I look forward to working with MAG, our Cities & Towns, the State and nonprofit partners on more permanent solutions to homelessness.

No single entity can solve this problem alone. We will seek to find opportunities with our partners to expand services throughout the County. I believe this issue deserves our best efforts and I know we have the talent to make progress.

Now there will be a time, hopefully in the very near future, where this County will return to some sense of normalcy. This will be a time of opportunity and we should be prepared.

We know that as the economy recovers we will be competing with other regions across the country for people, jobs and opportunities.

So, what does Maricopa County have that other regions don't?

70-degree winter days, for one.

But more importantly, we have leaders in this region who understand that we are stronger when we work together.

It's one reason our job market is one of the best in the country right now.

It's why we have been the fastest-growing county for 3 years running.

And if we can get government bodies on the same page, working in partnership with the COUNTRY'S most innovative school, ASU, and some of its most tech-savvy businesses, we can solve problems that once seemed insurmountable.

That is the goal of the Smart Region Consortium championed by Supervisor Gates, and it is a framework I hope to leverage during my Chairmanship. Bill, I will look to you for opportunities where the County may play a role and benefit from partnerships.

Another issue that requires regional collaboration is transportation. It is something I know quite well after serving as chair on both the MAG Transportation Policy Committee and the State Transportation Board.

The leaders who crafted Prop 400 in the early 2000's laid the groundwork for the growth we see today. Maricopa County is not only the fastest growing

County in population but we also lead the nation in attracting businesses. That is something those leaders can be proud of today.

So now it's time for current leaders throughout Maricopa County to get serious about our infrastructure needs for the next 20 years. This Board has a significant role to play.

I will continue to be our representative on the MAG Transportation Policy Committee and I plan to work closely with Supervisor Hickman, who I have asked to stay on as our representative at the MAG Regional Council. I will continue to keep my friendship with the current members of the State Transportation Board.

I truly hope that we, along with our cities/towns and MAG, can put in the work and make the tough decisions necessary to assure the next generation has an opportunity to enjoy the quality of life available to our citizens today. During my tenure on the Board of Supervisors, we will complete a regional transportation and infrastructure plan that will go to

the voters. A plan sent to the voters needs to assure regional equity and flexibility. Crafting and getting voter approval for a new regional transportation plan is one of my highest priorities—not just for my Chairmanship but for as long as it takes to get it done right.

In addition, I want to say a few words about another opportunity that may be available to us. The incoming Presidential administration has hinted that they are willing to work with Congress on passing infrastructure investment legislation. I need Maricopa County to be ready to participate in any program that will benefit this region. I ask that MCDOT and our Flood Control District work closely with our Government Relations team on the progress of such a program. We want to be ready to jump on this opportunity and I know through the leadership of Jennifer Toth and Mike Fulton, we can be. So please, let's do all we can to be prepared.

Now let's address the biggest elephant in the room...election integrity.

First, and most importantly, the Board of Supervisors' welcomes good-faith efforts to make our elections the best they can be. That is why my colleagues and I support a full forensic audit of our election tabulation equipment once all litigation related to the 2020 General Election is over. As Supervisor Chucri has said we are totally committed to best-in-class elections and relentless improvement in all areas of our organization. We will work with the new Recorder, the Legislature, and election experts, regardless of political party, to make sure people can vote when and how they want. They need to trust that their ballot was counted as it was cast. Some might say this is redundant or unnecessary, but I believe another audit is worth it if we can give even one more person a renewed faith in our democracy.

To be clear, audits and hand counts to date have shown ballots cast in 2020 were tabulated

accurately, starting with the Presidential Preference Election in March, continuing into the August Primary, and concluding with the November General. Many experts believe these were some of the finest and most secure elections we've had.

I've spent a lot of time looking into the allegations that have been thrown around since November 3rd. We all have. The stakes are too high not to take this seriously. I went in with an open mind.

But today there's no "there" there.

I'm discouraged to hear people in the public square, on social media, and to my face, insist otherwise.

And I'm afraid it's easier than ever for misinformation to spread.

In many ways, I believe this is the greatest challenge we face as a country.

The ability to work from a shared set of facts.

The facts are: 10 different times complaints about election fraud, manipulation, or tampering in Maricopa County's 2020 election have been

brought against this Board. Each case has been dismissed by the courts or withdrawn by the plaintiffs.

I've asked enough questions and seen enough of our operation to feel comfortable looking people in the eye and giving them my word: our elections were run with integrity and the results canvassed by the Board were accurate.

I understand that nothing I say from this podium is likely to convince those who flood our phone lines and inboxes.

But I am committed to trying.

In 2021, we will go above and beyond with our education efforts and communications to assure people of the integrity of our Elections operations.

Maricopa County Elections has a fantastic staff, great leadership, and a desire to serve. They are the best of us, and theirs is a story I'm happy to tell anyone willing to listen.

Transparency, not just in elections, will be one of the cornerstones of my Chairmanship. We will share information with the public. We will be open to feedback. And we will be inclusive to all who want to participate.

I expect our staff to be open to new ideas and perspectives and welcoming of public inquiry, so long as that inquiry is in good faith.

I know there are many tough decisions ahead. We are still in a public health emergency. The need in our community is great, but the money is not unlimited. We benefitted in the last year from federal CARES Act funds, but this year holds no such promise of federal support. Under my leadership spending requests will need to be justified as necessary. I know my colleagues have long history of being fiscally prudent and we will work together on a FY 2022 budget that works for all our residents.

I cannot think of another time in my life where tomorrow holds so much uncertainty.

In my two years on the Board, we have been presented with so many unusual challenges that nothing seems shocking anymore.

What gives me great hope is what I've seen from this dais, in meetings with my colleagues, and in the daily work of our county workforce. Whatever the challenge, whatever the crisis, Maricopa County does not flail wildly from place to place. We don't over-react or under-react. We deal with issues professionally and logically. We do it with respect and we do it based on facts.

I believe that approach will serve us well in 2021.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your Chairman.