

Our ability to vote needs to be non-partisan, and I believe the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors has taken an important step to ensure people of all backgrounds and political beliefs can look at our elections system with confidence rather than skepticism.

State law splits responsibilities for elections between elected bodies at the county level. County Recorders in Arizona are given responsibility for several activities leading up to Election Day including voter registration and early voting. Boards of Supervisors have responsibility for much of what happens *on Election Day*, including the location and number of polling places, the equipment to count votes, and the training and assigning of poll workers.

However, elections in Maricopa County are governed by a charter that originated in 1955. Under the agreement, the Board turned over its responsibilities for Election Day activities to the Recorder. In practical terms, this has meant one elected official responsible for overseeing election activities rather than six.

When I joined the Board early this year, the wheels were already in motion to bring Maricopa County election operations into closer alignment with state statute, with duties once again divided. This was part of a larger goal to make Maricopa County elections “best in class.” How we organized the Elections Department was one piece, but not the entirety, of the challenge.

In January, a non-partisan work group was established to explore improvements to the following aspects of county elections: staffing, technology, and organizational structure. Last month, I joined my colleagues in voting for the work group’s [amended final recommendations](#). With that vote, and the support of the Recorder, here’s what will change:

- 1. New vote counting machines.** Maricopa County will acquire new vote tabulation machines that protect the integrity and security of each vote while also allowing us to count ballots more quickly.
- 2. Staffing additions.** The county will fund new elections department staff after an independent staffing analysis is complete. The right staffing is essential to support a successful election season.
- 3. New executive structure.** Right now, the Elections Director reports only to the Recorder. This has made effective oversight difficult for the Board. That’s why we split the Elections Director position into two, so both the Recorder and the Board will have a “point person” inside the elections department. The Board’s point person will be one of only four positions countywide that report directly to us. We expect the two directors to work together to improve accountability, transparency and service delivery across all levels of voting. So far, they are doing just that.

I’ve been impressed with the efforts of all the parties involved to find consensus in moving us forward with technology and a structure that is focused on the voter and ensures that our elections are efficient, transparent, and fair.

However, the work isn’t done. The next step is crafting a new elections operations agreement that amends the current charter. This agreement, coupled with technology and staffing improvements, gives our team the tools to deliver a high-quality voting experience to all residents, no matter how they choose to cast their ballot.

Through collaboration with the Recorder and a non-partisan approach to elections, I’m confident the 2020 election cycle will be a successful one in the nation’s fastest-growing county.

Jack Sellers is a Chandler resident and a member of the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors