

A Citizen's Plea for Relief, Balance, and Local Accountability in Maricopa County

Today I speak as a private citizen, Maricopa County resident and taxpayer, and United States Marine Corps veteran, and Peace Officer who has proudly served this community for over two decades. No, I was never part of the Human Smuggling Unit or Employer Sanctions, those units only made up about 30 of the over 2500 employees. I worked in the other 98.8% of the Sheriff's Office that wasn't involved in the court's record of constitutional violations. Nothing compels me to speak other than my own conscience and the oath I swore long ago to defend the Constitution of the United States. I appear today in my personal capacity as a private citizen because I am always bound by my oath to the Constitution, the laws of Arizona, and the people I serve.

Unfortunately, I have carried coffins for both the Marine Corps and law enforcement, a reminder that service and sacrifice often come with a heavy cost—and that duty to one's fellow citizens does not end when the uniform comes off. It is that same sense of duty—on my own accord—that moves me to advocate for both the public and employees today.

Due to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office being tax funded, any litigation is of major public concern. And I believe our community must openly discuss the balance between federal authority and local self-governance.

For more than fifteen years, the *Melendres v. Arpaio* litigation has placed the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office under ongoing federal oversight. The original findings of constitutional violations were serious and demanded reform, which was rightly undertaken. Yet today, the continued reach of that oversight raises a vital question: Has the federal remedy fulfilled its purpose, or has it begun to hinder our ability to serve our growing county effectively?

Further, we must ask whether the order itself has become impossible to fully comply with, given the ever-evolving nature of law enforcement and the expansive scope of the mandates imposed. Even if, for the sake of argument, the Sheriff's Office were to achieve 100% compliance with every paragraph overnight; would it still be necessary—or fiscally responsible—to continue operating under a federal monitor for an additional 36 months for full and effective compliance. Assuming MCSO spends 35 million a year 36 months would cost the taxpayers another \$100 million? This question is not about resistance; it is about reason, proportionality, and stewardship of public resources.

In 2008, Maricopa County's population was approximately 3.8 million residents, supported by roughly 800 sworn deputies performing the work of about 1,000. Today, our county has grown to over 4.7 million people, while the overall number of sworn deputies has fallen to roughly 500, with approximately 250 Deputies on Patrol tending to the public's emergencies. That means our community now faces higher demands for public safety gaining nearly 1 million more people with far less than half the manpower—a direct consequence of prolonged oversight that diverts millions in taxpayer funds from front-line services to administrative compliance measures. The intent of federal supervision was to

correct constitutional deficiencies; the unintended outcome has been reduced staffing, strained morale, and diminished service capacity.

Two real world examples of how the structured oversight is negatively impacting our community is MCSO requiring the assistance of neighboring agencies. Hard to believe the 4th largest Sheriffs Office in the Country would need this but the Mesa Police Department in 2025 has responded to assist MCSO 197 times. And Chandler Police responded not less than 60 times in the past year. These are not simple paper calls. These calls were for priority-one traffic involving fights, car accidents with injuries, emergency medical calls, armed robberies and gun shot victims.

As of December 2025, MCSO Patrol District 1 had 58 employees and operates at 70% Staffing. Patrol District 2 operates at 56% Staffing, Patrol District 3 66% Staffing and Patrol District 4 with a shocking 53% Staffing. In the past few years MCSO has lost two contract cities: Litchfield Park and the Town of Queen Creek. In 2021 Queen Creek was staffed by MCSO with approximately 40 personnel and in 2022 when Queen Creek Police Department formed, they launched 70 Patrol Officers to properly meet their publics needs.

Where did all the employees go? Well, the Professional Standards Bureau has not less than 78 personnel with only 2 vacancies, more than 20 more employees than the busiest patrol district in Maricopa County. The Bureau of Internal Oversight, Court Implementation and Training have 119 overall personnel with 93% staffing. More resources are forced to be spent on compliance than our public's safety, quite the disparate outcome.

Another disturbing disparate outcome is where this money is going. The 5 victims, not the thousands we as the public were led to believe have been paid roughly \$266,000. Yet the Plaintiffs' Attorneys have been compensated not less than \$13 million, that's right they have been paid roughly 50 times more than the "Victims." The Monitor has been paid over \$30 million dollars; he hasn't even finished his lucrative for-profit job, and he has already made over 100 times more than the victims. I don't know for sure, but it feels like the 1/3 population of Maricopa County with Hispanic lineage are being used for profit by a select few.

Federal law under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 and the equitable powers of the courts allows judges to issue injunctions to remedy proven constitutional wrongs. However, under longstanding Supreme Court precedent—including *Milliken v. Bradley*, *Frew v. Hawkins*, and *Horne v. Flores*—such remedies must be narrowly tailored and no more intrusive than necessary to achieve compliance. Federal oversight should recede once its corrective purpose is satisfied, in keeping with the federalist balance and state sovereignty envisioned by our Constitution.

My plea for relief is not a legal motion but a civic appeal: that the Federal Court, the Department of Justice, and our state leadership conduct an independent, transparent review of whether continued court oversight of the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office remains necessary. Our locally elected officials—including the Sheriff, County Attorney, and Board of Supervisors—should be allowed to fully resume their constitutional responsibilities to the people of Maricopa County. True reform is proven not by perpetual supervision, but by the

ability to sustain accountability from within. Not from a cloak and dagger approach with invoices sealed from public view, while making money from the peoples tax dollars.

I make this request with full respect for the rule of law, the judiciary, and the authority of the federal court. My intent is not resistance, but a respectful plea on behalf of the public for proportionality, fiscal responsibility, and local empowerment. The First Amendment guarantees the right to petition our government for redress of grievances, and I exercise that right today in good faith as a veteran, a resident of Maricopa County, a taxpayer, and a father raising my family in this county.

Fortunately, I have had the privilege as the President of the Deputies Law Enforcement Association to witness firsthand, the transformation of MCSO—the professionalism of its members, and their commitment to constitutional policing. Those who wear the badge today are not the same agency of 2008; they are better, wiser, and deeply accountable to both law and community. Perhaps the time has come for the court to recognize that growth and allow Maricopa County to once again stand on its own guided by the Constitution, answerable to its people, and free to serve its citizens without perpetual federal shadow.

As a taxpayer in Maricopa County, I share the financial burden with my 4.7 million neighbors who ultimately fund this ongoing litigation. Beyond the original, necessary corrections of the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendment violations, it is increasingly difficult to identify tangible public benefit from the continued oversight. In that sense, I perceive my position to be akin to that of an intervenor, because the out-of-state monitor's continued presence now causes direct harm to public resources and the administrative function of the Sheriff's Office itself. We are now under our fourth Sheriff since the order's inception, and if the monitor has not achieved success after over eleven years, I find it hard to believe he ever will, so long as the current structure continues to reward duration over resolution.

Based upon the MCSO Spending report the Victims of the Melendres Case have been compensated. Please tell me if I am wrong but I find it hard to believe the Monitor Team, a contracted officer of the court, should be compensated 100 times more than the victims of the Melendres case. Shouldn't the courts priority be the people and not a private lucrative industry.

Jovially, I have always wondered if Officers from agencies across the United States look to their former colleagues now employed on the monitoring team as Obi-Wan looked at Aniken. "You were the chosen one! It was said that you would destroy the Sith not join them! Bring balance to the Force, not leave it in darkness!"

I am no Judicial Authority, but the people of Maricopa County desperately need relief. Pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 60(b)(5), this Court is expressly authorized—and obligated—to relieve a party from prospective enforcement of a judgment or injunction when "applying it prospectively is no longer equitable." The Melendres litigation constitutes long-term institutional reform litigation that was intended to be temporary in nature, not perpetually metastasized to its current state. What do a handful of traffic stops have to do with the Jail system all cities within Maricopa County utilize to ensure our public's safety. 4 Sheriffs ago and well over a decade MCSO ceased immigration enforcement activities that formed the basis of the original constitutional violation and has implemented extensive

policy reforms, training standards, and accountability systems demonstrating sustained compliance. Continued federal supervision now exceeds its remedial purpose and imposes ongoing structural, financial, and operational burdens that are no longer justified by any present constitutional violation. Under Rule 60(b)(5), and consistent with the Supreme Court's holdings in *Rufo v. Inmates of Suffolk County Jail*, *Horne v. Flores*, and *Board of Education v. Dowell*, prospective enforcement of the Melendres orders is no longer equitable and must be dissolved in the public's best interests.

—Chris Clark
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