

January 11, 2013

Open Letter to my Constituents:

In 2009, when I was first approached by the local Republican Party leadership to consider running for the Tucson City Council, there was a clear mutual understanding that my political inclinations are to the center. I committed to looking at each issue on a one-by-one basis, studying the merits of all sides and voting based on the set of facts, not on the basis of a rigid ideology. From the standpoint of being able to win cross-over votes, and drawing out the center of the Republican Party, leadership felt my candidacy would be attractive to the voters. From a personal perspective, I entered the race comfortable believing that if elected, my role would be to demonstrate that bi-partisanship could work. My hope was to be a standard bearer for what I believed to be a large, centrist component of the party.

During the past three years, I have maintained my commitment to study issues individually, invite to the table the diverse set of voices that make up our community, and participate in crafting public policy that attempts to reflect the varying points of view I have heard. Simply applying hard work and common sense, and not starting from a preconceived notion of the 'right answer,' I've dug into the complex issues we face and have tried to vote in ways that reflect the greater good of the community. I have heard supportive comments from members of both the Republican and Democratic party, and from registered Independents as well. I thank each person who has acknowledged the work ethic I have tried to demonstrate.

And yet, over the past two election cycles it has become clear that the local and Arizona State Republican Party is being driven by a small, but vocal faction that has taken it far to the political right. That faction has effectively taken over the Party leadership and is driving an ideological agenda that I do not believe reflects the common will of the community. I continue to believe that there is a healthy contingent of registered Republicans who gravitate to the center and are willing to listen to all sides of an issue before forming a position. I hear from them, and they voice both a frustration and an embarrassment over the image the Party has brought upon itself in this State.

In the past two years I have made an effort to resist the lurch to the right that the Party leadership has embraced. I have written, spoken out and voted in ways that I believe reflect not only the centrist approach the voters supported in 2009, but I have also openly attempted to prevent the erosion of the Party label that has now occurred throughout the State. In that time, the local Republican party leadership has disengaged from its involvement in local issues. The Pima County GOP was completely silent throughout our 9 month Ward Redistricting process, has played no role what so ever in our budget prioritizing discussions, and has not engaged at even a minimal level when we have addressed other significant issues such as our water policy, public safety or transit. Instead, what is heard from Party leadership is extreme partisan rhetoric that serves no productive role in crafting good public policy on the bread and butter issues with which the Mayor and Council deal.

With that approach, the leadership does not reflect those who wear the Party label but who are not inclined to embrace a far right wing ideology. There is a centrist element in the Party, but it is not allowed a seat at the table at which the Party agenda is set. Party leadership cannot expect

that group to continue to wear a label that does not reflect its central values.

The Arizona Republican Party is an ideological outlier. I am not, and I see nothing that indicates that leadership is inclined to move in any direction but further away from what I believe are the values of this community. I appreciate the support I have been given by those in the Party who share these feelings. I also appreciate the support I have been given by both Independents and Democrats who have openly recognized my efforts to craft common sense public policy, untethered from an extreme ideological position. But the Republican Party leadership cannot expect those of us whose purpose it is to reach common ground across varying political interests to continue to wear a label that rejects that core principle.

I will therefore be changing my party registration to Democrat. In doing so, I will not change the manner in which I have approached the study of each issue, and I will not abandon the common sense, hard work I have shown that I have committed to this seat on the Council. My colleagues and I will continue to agree on many issues, and we will disagree on some as well. What is most important though is that as we craft public policy, we each respect the fact that every person at the table brings a unique perspective, and each deserves a voice in the discussion. That dynamic does not exist within the leadership of the Arizona Republican Party.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Kozachik". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and a long, sweeping underline.

Steve Kozachik