

## Chairman's Speech 2018: Chairman Steve Chucri, District 2

Thank you.

To my wife, Christine. My sons, Grant and Will. My mom and family members. My fellow board members and elected leaders. To the 13,000 strong who make up this government, and to the four million-plus we serve. Thank you for allowing me another opportunity to be your Chairman. It's a responsibility I take seriously, and a challenge I approach humbly, knowing that the vision I lay out today is not the final word but simply the beginning of a year-long conversation.

Three years ago I stood before you and advocated for a government that *listens...*

And here I am, standing again and *talking*.

The truth is, we *\*have\** listened as a government, under the leadership of County Manager Joy Rich and recent chairmen Denny Barney and Clint Hickman.

We listened to taxpayers who told us: spend our money wisely. So we've improved our customer service while keeping our budget balanced, our AAA credit rating intact, and our service costs well below our counterparts across the region.

We listened to planners who said, don't just build buildings: invest in technology. And in so doing we reduced our energy bills and built records' systems and databases that make our teams more efficient. Supervisor Gates has championed this issue, and I think all of us on the board believe in technology as an avenue to leaner, more efficient government.

We listened to business people frustrated with delays in getting permits, submitting plans, and complying with regulations. And with leadership from Supervisor Barney, we've been addressing their concerns so we have an environment where industry grows quickly. It's that "philosophy of velocity" that says one innovator can bring five more. That opportunity loves company.

We listened to veterans who want to serve here at home but could use some help with transition to civilian life. So we are leveraging dollars and partnerships to help link current and former military with better jobs and homes. Supervisor Hickman, your work on this issue has been tireless and the "Military and Veteran Success Center" that opened late last year at Luke Air Force Base is just the kind of comprehensive, community-focused solution we need.

Most of all, we have listened to our hearts because we believe in a government that creates more opportunities for its residents to create better lives. My colleague Steve Gallardo embodies this mindset in his work to provide new opportunities for families in his district, and I see it every day when I come to work... across all 50 lines of our business. There is a desire to help. There is a hunger to do better.

So we have tried to be a government that listens.

Today I want to lay out my vision for a government that **optimizes**.

Every dollar. Every piece of data. Every connection. All with the goal of building a better community. Not just for those who are comfortable right now, but for the growing number among us who are at risk.

I don't want to sugarcoat this: our county is becoming less livable for some of our residents. The weather is reaching new extremes, and that's made ozone a bigger problem. Economic opportunity has expanded in many of our zip codes, but is hard to see in others. There are more homeless youth on our streets and one of the worst drug epidemics of the past century is touching every corner of our county, tearing apart families, complicating work for law enforcement, and testing the resources and patience of our support systems.

To solve these problems, we cannot stay in our silos, saying to ourselves, it's not my job.

To ensure this beautiful county is prosperous and safe for our kids and their kids, we must be all in.

So I pledge to you today a new commitment to the hard work involved in building a smart, sustainable future.

It is what we must do for the county we love. The county where I was born and raised.

The truth is, none of us would be here if not for the sustainable planning of resilient people.

The Hohokam, whose canals gave us accessible water and farmable land.

The settlers of the late 1800's, who set up the institutions that maintained order.

Visionaries and doers of the last century- who redefined the desert with just five C's.

The guy who invented the air conditioner, Willis Carrier.

That guy's a hero.

Without the ingenuity of those who came before, we wouldn't be where we are. The nation's fastest-growing county. Home to more than four million people and strong tech, health, aerospace, and business sectors. No longer just one farm next to another as far as the eye can see.

Well, maybe for Clint it still is.

We have grown because we have asked how government can best serve the resilient people who want to make a better life here.

People like Sara, a mother of four who made her way into the county justice system this year after a long-term relationship fell apart and she got caught up in drugs. The drugs led her to the streets and an abusive relationship. All of it cost her custody of her kids.

By the time of her arrest, she was homeless, out of work, dependent on drugs, and 17 weeks pregnant.

It's not what she planned.

But Sara has turned out to be pretty resourceful. And she's had help.

Everyone who enters our jail system- is screened by our Correctional Health team.

The staff member who screened Sara developed a plan specific to her needs.

That meant connecting her to the right people outside of jail, to prevent a relapse.

Correctional Health worked with our trusted partner, Community Bridges, to get Sara into a program for expectant mothers. That same staff member who screened her left nothing to chance and was there when Sara was released from jail to take her to the appropriately named "Center for Hope."

It was there Sara got off drugs and gave birth to a healthy baby. She is now seven months clean and able to visit her children again.

A pending county court charge was dropped because of her commitment to the program.

The next step for Sara is getting a job. And Maricopa County has resources to help with that as well.

We could ignore people like Sara. Let them stay on the streets, cycle in and out of jail. Send them out of our custody in the same shape in which they entered. Paying each step of the way.

But that's not the smart thing to do, and it's not the decent thing to do.

For all of our bickering about politics—all of the meanness out there, and the petty fights, and the name-calling—we are still connected by a common decency.

We are strengthened when we build partnerships. Public and private. Non-profits and faith-based. Your department and mine. Breaking down silos and working together. That is how we take on complex challenges. That is the only way we make a difference for our children, our neighbors, and for people like Sara.

So I hope we will let that sense of decency guide us as we consider the work that is to be done in the coming year.

The challenges in front of us are not small, and they stretch beyond this present day. So as we endeavor to build a better Maricopa County, we can't just sit around waiting for someone else to do the job, to make the connection, to look at the data and find the story that makes a difference. Those jobs belong to all of us. The responsibility of exceptional customer service...belongs to all of us.

So many people want to live in Maricopa County, and as a county government, there has been so much good work done to support our growing population.

But we need to have a long-term perspective.

So this is the year we start creating a healthier urban environment. That means cleaner air. Fewer heat-related illnesses and deaths. Greater investment in energy innovation.

To start, I am calling for a joint meeting between the Board of Supervisors, the Industrial Development Authority of Maricopa County, and Dr. Michael Crow and

his colleagues at Arizona State, who are doing such important research on the ways weather, air quality, energy, and health intersect. We need to be on the same page so we can optimize our impact. I want to acknowledge my old boss, former Congressman Matt Salmon, whose new job at ASU has put him at the center of this critical discussion about atmospheric research.

Our Air Quality Department can help with this effort... not just in terms of programs that address the brown cloud and improve our air... but with resources that can be funneled toward focused ASU research on the broader goal of healthy communities.

ASU scientists say within two generations the Valley could have an average of 91 days above 110 degrees! That's approximately a quarter of the year!

In 2016, at least 150 people died from heat-related causes, the highest number since Public Health started counting.

We need regional solutions.

One example is the partnership between Public Health, Vitalyst, and the Nature Conservancy. Those groups are working to bring natural cooling systems, like permeable pavement and storm-water retention, to sun-parched, at-risk neighborhoods such as the Broadway corridor in my hometown of Mesa.

We are all here today because this is a beautiful place to live. Each community is different, but we can no longer turn a blind eye to extreme weather as a potential threat to all the progress we've made.

Of course, this isn't just a public health issue. It's an economic issue.

And I want this to be the year we get more people connected with jobs that improve their quality of life.

The innovative companies bringing the work of the future to Maricopa County want to know that life in the desert is sustainable. That they can make a long-term investment here... because WE are making a long-term investment here.

And we will do that- by addressing livability issues and by continuing to support innovation.

That's why we are involved in the Pipeline AZ project. It will be the nation's premier software platform linking job seekers to employers and educational opportunities. For employers, it means better, faster, and less expensive recruiting. For job seekers, it means no more filling out the same forms over and over, getting bounced between case workers, or wasting time with keyword searches. And it also features a skills translator... meaning you could be linked to industries that never would have considered you before... and that maybe YOU never would have considered.

I'm excited our Industrial Development Authority has been proactive in encouraging job growth. With grants, they are helping to fund innovative manufacturing companies like NeoLight; to provide education and funding to veterans with an interest in entrepreneurship; and to bolster industries that are uniquely suited to grow in Arizona. Industries like medical technology that can capitalize on existing hospitals, industry pioneers such as Medtronic, and the minds of a world-class university to build something special.

We need more of these public-private partnerships. We need those from different disciplines and backgrounds working together to re-engineer our economy so that people who are born here, who go to school here, who have family here... stay here.

We also realize that as we help make Maricopa County a more desirable place to live and work, we risk creating a larger gap between those able to thrive in a new economy and those who lack the resources to adapt.

The fact is, our homeless population is growing.

So this is the year we get more people off the streets... and into housing. Because we know from research- that's the first step.

When you get someone into a home, and address their basic need for stability, then you can begin to work with them on other issues.

That's why we've funded rapid rehousing efforts.

That's why we have backed public housing efforts such as Madison Heights and Coffelt.

That's why our Correctional Health team has a box that inmates can check if they have been homeless, so that we can link them to affordable housing. Part of a long-term recovery plan.

That's why we continue to support the amazing work of the downtown Human Services campus... and St. Vincent de Paul.

We know homelessness is a regional problem and we are committed to working with local cities and towns on real, lasting solutions.

I'm grateful to the East Valley for coming to the table and making this a priority. Cities like Mesa and Tempe... non-profits... faith organizations... they are all committed to long-term progress. I'm grateful to case managers who see faces, not statistics... and landlords willing to take a chance on the long shots.

We also know that people tend to congregate in the urban core and can be served better with short-term shelter stays rather than temporary fixes.

So I'm hopeful that this is the year well-meaning people can stop competing with one another and focus on real solutions. Where there's space available, let politics get out of the way.

This is the year we reduce the number of people dying from opioid overdoses. Already, trained deputies and jail staff are saving lives with the opioid antidote, Narcan. And as we expand the MOSAIC substance abuse program, more people in our jails will get skills to replace the substance. We have been leaders on this issue and now is not the time to be complacent.

This is the year we fully embrace diversion for low-risk offenders in our criminal justice system. We need to break free of this idea that putting people in jail is equivalent to being tough on crime. I don't want to just be tough; I want to be effective in terms of safety and in terms of cost. I want to build on successes like we've seen with our award-winning FACT teams. Working with Mercy Maricopa... these health care and justice professionals are getting people with serious mental illness out of our jail system and into supervised treatment that supports their individual needs. That approach has resulted in a 19% reduction in homelessness... a 76% reduction in jail bookings... and a 31% reduction in psychiatric hospital admissions among FACT clients.

Some people belong in jail. But not everyone does. That's why I pushed us to sign the Stepping Up Proclamation during my first chairmanship, and why I support Smart Justice initiatives to this day. Every time we successfully divert someone, we are making an investment in building a stronger community for everyone.

Of course, to provide the best service to others, we must take a close look at ourselves.

So this is the year we update our countywide strategic plan so we have goals that are measurable, that line up with the priorities of those we represent, and that are easily understandable and available to anyone who wants to know our vision. In Maricopa County, we will be transparent. We will show our work.

To our county workforce: we will continue the workforce transformation effort that began during my first chairmanship so employees across all 50 lines of business are judged according to the same standards. We want the best to be rewarded and given space to grow. Those who fall short need to be held accountable. Every time.

We're going to improve the hiring process so that the strongest job applicants are no longer left in limbo for months because of an inefficient, bureaucratic process established when some of you were teenagers. Your departments deserve better. This year we will recruit faster and more efficiently so that we get "best in class" people for a "best in class" operation. Anything less will not do.

I look forward to working with our "continuous improvement team" on innovative ways to enhance our service, countywide. People say change is scary. Why? Change is inevitable and when it makes work better, it should be embraced.

You may know my grandfather was the first licensed auto dealer in Mesa, and one of the things he taught me is that last year's model is not good enough.

The truth is, plenty of our processes and policies are old clunkers and we should trade them in for something better. There's no doubt we have some big challenges to address in 2018. Here are two big ones we can't lose track of:



We have to accelerate our effort to comply with the Melendres order. Look, we know we've made progress. Yet compensation for the court-appointed monitor and staff have cost the county more than 10 million dollars since 2014.

All of us share the goal of following the order to the letter of the law. But this has to be a two-way street, and as Chairman, I will be asking a lot of tough questions to ensure we are making (and being credited for) consistent, measurable progress.

We are a division of the State of Arizona, and decisions made at the Capitol can make our jobs easier or harder. We've endured years of cost shifts—you all know this. Things that the state used to pay for, that now we are paying for. This is not sustainable. To build a better Arizona, counties must be fully-supported. So we're going to continue to speak up and push for parity and fairness.

We are meeting at a time when the potential impact of what we do has never been greater. We are the nation's fastest-growing county and its fourth most populous—with all the promise and peril that comes with those distinctions. As I've said before, we are big enough to get the job done and small enough to care.

We don't always get the attention that other governments get. And I think that's partly because we don't spit out solutions in sound-bites. We don't promise to end homelessness and tell you to take our word for it. We don't say we're going to reduce repeat offenders in our jails without a plan to do it, track it, and change our approach if the evidence points that way. In Maricopa County, we don't just write an answer on a chalkboard and walk away. We show our work.

So this year, let's tell people exactly what we're doing to coordinate emergencies, protect homes, make traffic run more smoothly, keep our air clean and our food safe. Let's tell them how we are finding homes for people who don't have them, and how we're dealing with those who have broken our laws so the worst are punished fully and those at the lowest-risk are given skills, connections, and a second chance. Let's tell them how we're innovating... to create a more sustainable future.

To our talented 13,000 county employees: don't let the way it has always been done deter you from the way it *should* be done.

To those elected to serve: let's not allow our ambition to outpace our judgment.

To everyone who calls Maricopa County home: no matter your politics, your background, your current situation... we are connected by a common decency. Your family and mine. Your business and hers. Your cause and theirs.

Government can't and shouldn't do everything.

But this is the year we will take what we do well and optimize it so we can say to our friends and neighbors, we are using tax dollars wisely and we are making lives better. That is why we do this. That is where I want to lead.

Thank you.