

# DECEIT IN THE DESERT: ARIZONA GOP STOOPS TO NEW LOW



Thomas and Sheriff Joke

Hello from the state that has brought you John McCain. Sorry about that. You would think that would be enough shame for the Arizona Republican Party. Sadly, they have much more to offer. Reprehensible does not start to describe the efforts of the Arizona GOP and their poster boy of hate, Maricopa County Attorney Andrew Thomas. You may remember Thomas, he was behind the blatantly unconstitutional arrest and attempted prosecution of the two publishers of the local independent investigative weekly newspaper, The New Times.

Andrew Thomas is a young, extreme right wing, fundamentalist nightmare, and he, along with his best friend Joe Arpaio, are the law in Maricopa County, the home of Phoenix and the fourth most populated county in the United States. Here is the latest morally repugnant bile out of Andrew Thomas and the Arizona GOP:

An official with the Arizona Republican Party says he pulled an innuendo-heavy ad linking Tim Nelson, the Democratic candidate for county attorney, to defense lawyers in child- pornography and child-murder cases.

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The ad refers to suggestions made in news releases, news conferences and interviews generated by Rose's agency.

In mid-September, one of Rose's associates issued a news release saying that a lawyer who defends pornographers contributed to Nelson's campaign. Nelson donated the \$390 in question to a charity for parents of murdered

children.

"It's sickening that they have sunk to a new low," Nelson said.

Nelson characterized Thomas' attacks as "personal, mean and with false innuendo."

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The Nelson ad opens with images of children riding tricycles and eating dinner at a family table.

"They deserve a safe neighborhood, a secure home," a woman's voice says.

"They deserve the innocence of childhood and all of its wonder. And they deserve to be protected."

Then there's a drum roll and a frowning photo of Tim Nelson flashes on screen.

"But can they count on liberal ACLU lawyer Tim Nelson?" the woman continues.

"He took money from a child pornographer and from lawyers who defend child murderers. Liberal Tim Nelson isn't just wrong. He's dangerous."

What are Tim Nelson's crimes? That fully upstanding citizens, that happen to be employed as criminal defense attorneys, contributed to his campaign. Oh, yes, and that over ten years ago, the firm that Nelson worked at was appointed by the court to assist an indigent defendant with a death penalty appeal. Not Nelson personally understand you, just his firm. Wonderful. The United States Constitution guarantees criminal defendants the right to counsel. But when big civil law firms, like the one Nelson worked at, donate their time in the interest of upholding the Constitution and the rule of law, everybody affiliated with them are tarred by Andrew Thomas and the Arizona GOP as dangerous criminal aider and abettors themselves. This is beyond despicable.

And what does Andrew Thomas himself have to say

about this? Is he apologetic and embarrassed? Of course not. While admitting that the ad was slightly exaggerated, Thomas dives right back into the cesspool.

"The fact is: My opponent has prostituted himself to lawyers for Valley criminals," Thomas said. "I would hope the party, if they choose to help my campaign, will rework the ad to stick to the facts as laid out in our campaign material."

We talk so much about the national elections here, and with good reason, the Presidential and Congressional elections are of critical significance with our nation teetering on the brink of self immolation. But the simple fact of the matter is that the vast majority of real governance occurs at the state and local level. We must not forget that; those elections count every bit as much as the national ones in a lot of ways. More and better Democrats are direly needed all the way across the board.

In Maricopa County, a very critical spot in the rapidly growing and significant Southwest, arguably the most significant spot, there is a chance to make a dent. While Sheriff Joe Arpaio probably cannot be defeated, Andrew Thomas sure can. It is a neck and neck race, and Tim Nelson is a very solid candidate. Nelson is very close to Janet Napolitano, who is remarkably popular in Arizona for a Democrat, and he has run an honorable race so far. But Thomas is far better financed, and is benefitting from outside GOP money and groups that are active here because of McCain.

It is a miracle that Nelson is dead even with Thomas. Thomas won the office in 2004 by a huge margin. Tim Nelson needs help to finish off the deal. I will be discussing this race again in the coming days. In the meantime, however, if you live in Arizona, or have an interest in seeing an extremely critical race won by the good guy for once, help Tim Nelson out by

donating some time or money. We always strive to make a difference, we have a chance here.