

Arizona lawmakers call on Maricopa County sheriff to restore posse

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PHOENIX — Three Arizona Republicans are calling on Maricopa County Sheriff Paul Penzone to restore a volunteer posse that was suspended because most members were not properly certified.

State Reps. Ben Toma and Frank Carroll and state Sen. David Livingston urged Penzone to “quickly reinstate the duties of the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Posse, particularly in Sun City West.”

Penzone announced last month that the sheriff’s office was temporarily suspending the volunteers after it was found that only four of the posse’s 240 members completed the entire certification process.

A recent audit also found that individuals who were arrested or convicted for domestic violence, drug crimes, sex crimes and other offenses were removed from the volunteer force.

Toma told KTAR News 92.3 FM that residents rely on the posse for safety when deputies are not available.

“They rely on it to augment what the sheriff’s deputies do up there and they feel safer and they probably are safer when the posse’s on the road,” Tomas said.

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“We understand that there are some issues, perhaps, with some of the background checks and whatnot, which, I think that’s valid and should definitely be looked into,” he added.

“However, I think that should be done very quickly and for those posse members that there are no background issues with, they should be back on the street as soon as possible.”

Carroll said Sun City West is “safer with posse members patrolling the community.

“I’m glad that steps are being taken to provide greater oversight, but I hope that we can quickly get qualified posse members back on the streets,” he said in a statement.

The Sun City West posse is different than the Sun City posse, which removed its affiliation with the sheriff’s office in 2017 after a set of new court orders led to declining membership.

Livingston also said in a statement that Sun City West residents rely on the posse for “important community needs,” such as conducting welfare checks or responding to traffic crashes.

“I hope that the sheriff will reconsider his decision to upend the community with his sudden suspension of the posse.”

The Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office has not responded to a request for comment.

Sun City West is about 25 miles northwest of Phoenix.