2018 PULITZER PRIZE WINNER

ARIZONA REPUBLIC

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Trump: Israel, Iran ceasefire in effect

Tehran: Uranium stockpiles moved before U.S. hits

Susan Miller, Jorge L. Ortiz, John Bacon, Tom Vanden Brook, Kim Hjelmgaard, Francesca Chambers and Cybele Mayes-Osterman
USA TODAY

President Donald Trump tried to keep a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Iran in place on June 24 as reports emerged indicating the U.S. attack on Iran's nuclear facilities over the weekend was not as successful as he initially claimed.

Trump chastised Israel for accusing Iran of truce violations and ordering new strikes, saying he was "not happy" with either country as he spoke to reporters while leaving Washington for a NATO summit in Europe. Trump said he did not want to see regime change in Iran and strongly criticized U.S. ally Israel, saying the nation needs "to calm down."

"We basically have two countries that have been fighting so long and so hard that they don't know what the (expletive) they're doing," he said.

His fiery rhetoric came one day after a stunning series of developments escalated turmoil in the Middle East, culminating in a ceasefire proclaimed by Trump – and accepted by Israel and Iran. The announcement followed a 12-day conflict that drew in the United States, which launched strikes on three nuclear sites in Iran on June 21.

That attack featured 14 "bunker-buster" bombs dropped on three facilities, but only delayed Iran's nuclear program by a few months because the 30,000-pound weapons did not reach deep enough to destroy the underground installations, according to a Pentagon intelligence assessment.

Trump, on June 23, said he thought both Israel and

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As same-sex marriage turns 10, LGBTQ+ Arizonans

FEARFUL

Maizy Kohler and Michelle Winters on their wedding day.
PROVIDED BY MAIZY KOHLER

Terry Pochert (left) and Joe Connolly pose for a picture at their home in a Tempe retirement community.
PATRICK BREEN/THE REPUBLIC

Laura Gersony Arizona Republic | USA TODAY NETWORK

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Official who embezzled almost $40M gets 10 years

Then-Santa Cruz County treasurer stole over decade

Sarah Lapidus Arizona Republic | USA TODAY NETWORK

The former Santa Cruz County treasurer who embezzled almost $40 million over a decade from one of Arizona's poorest counties has been sentenced to 10 years in prison followed by three years of supervised release.

The sentencing Monday handed down by federal Judge Rosemary Marquez at the U.S. District Court in Tucson comes months after former Treasurer Elizabeth Gutfahr, 63, pleaded guilty in November to embezzling $38.7 million from 2014 to 2024. She also pleaded guilty to money laundering, and tax evasion for failing to pay income tax of more than $13 million.

Gutfahr spoke at the hearing, apologizing for the harm she has caused.

The judge sentenced Gutfahr for 10 years to be

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Who passed funding bill

A Chase Field funding bill drew bipartisan support and opposition, uniting some of the most conservative and progressive lawmakers against it. **1B**

Suns' possible draft picks

The Phoenix Suns have four picks entering the 2025 NBA Draft June 25-26 in Brooklyn, including the No. 10 overall pick, after trading away Kevin Durant. **1C**

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Marriage

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PATRICK BREEN/THE REPUBLIC

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Ten years down the line, they are, in Pochert's words, "ordinary." Their romantic history is long and storied enough that they, affectionately, quibbled over the details. They've settled into an apartment in a retirement home in Tempe. They make the beds, they do the shopping. A simple cross is mounted at the side of the door. Downstairs, photos of them, arms around each other, are featured in the retirement home's Pride Month display.

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"So for an older guy like me, the world has really changed," Pochert continued. "Even though the current political environment is really scary."

Indeed, there is a feeling among LGBTQ+ Arizonans that, after a decade defined by major legal victories and acceptance, the country is turning a new and uncertain page on their history. A traditionalist flank of the Republican Party is ascendant, pointing to homosexuality as one cause of the country's social woes. Young men in particular have passionately called for a return to "traditional" ways of living and being in love, using their platforms online to tear into a diversity-minded worldview that powered a wave of acceptance during the 2010s.

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Those shifting political winds have created a feeling of uncertainty and anxiety, even for LGBTQ+ individuals who aren't affected by changing rules on the books, said Eric Swank, a political sociologist at Arizona State University who studies progressive social movements.

"Just talking about all this change is detrimental to sexual minorities," Swank said. "Even if laws aren't passed ... still, it causes mental hardship."

In hindsight, the legal victories over marriage equality feel inevitable: They were the result of activism and legal fights decades in the making, and afterward, the American public quickly warmed to the idea of same-sex marriage. Among political scientists, the issue is seen as a textbook example of a rapid, progressive shift in U.S. public opinion.

But at the time, bringing same-sex marriage to Arizona was a fraught and politically risky fight, navigated at times through bitter disagreements among different parts of the coalition.

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Pochert and Connolly were skeptical. In 2008, not so long ago, voters in California had decided to amend the constitution to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. That was in California — a liberal stronghold — and not Arizona, which had reliably sent two Republican senators to Capitol Hill for almost 20 years.

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Both lawsuits were won in late 2014, overturning Arizona's ban.

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"I think the lesson really is, just, completely be who you are," Connolly said.

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But she said that, more so than in the past, things feel hard to predict. She's troubled by all the "anger and hatred" in politics, and some big developments from the past few years, such as changes in the country's leadership, have caught her by surprise. She said she believes her marriage rights will stick, and that Americans will grow more accepting of LGBTQ+ lifestyles in general, as they have over the last few decades. But then again, she's been wrong in the past, Kohler said.

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She still attends LGBTQ+ community events, such as the Pride festival, and she trusts, and appreciates that the organizations take safety seriously. But it's hard to shake the fear that an act of violence could shake the events she attends.

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Ten years down the line, they are, in Pochert's words, "ordinary." Their romantic history is long and storied enough that they, affectionately, quibbled over the details. They've settled into an apartment in a retirement home in Tempe. They make the beds, they do the shopping. A simple cross is mounted at the side of the door.

Downstairs, photos of them, arms around each other, are featured in the retirement home's Pride Month display.

They are among many LGBTQ+ couples in Arizona who have enjoyed, over the past decade, a sense of quietude: the familiar comfort of married life, the personal and financial benefits of a par tnership recognized by the government, and a growing confidence that they can be themselves, in private and in public.

Pochert, fair-skinned with a small, black nose ring and matching piercings up his ear, recalled how the bar in Detroit where they met was marked on the outside only by a street number.

"There was a time," said Pochert, when "the bars that you went to, and the places that you went to, were sort of secret," he said. "It was an age where being able to meet, or talk, or share a drink, or whatever: They were hidden."

Connolly, in a red polo shirt, watched his husband with a soft gaze.

"So for an older guy like me, the world has really changed," Pochert continued. "Even though the current political environment is really scary." Indeed, there is a feeling among LGBTQ+ Arizonans that, after a decade defined by major legal victories and acceptance, the country is turning a new and uncertain page on their history. A traditionalist flank of the Republican Party is ascendant, pointing to homosexuality as one cause of the country's social woes. Young men in particular have passionately called for a return to "traditional" ways of living and being in love, using their platforms online to tear into a diversity-minded worldview that powered a wave of acceptance during the 2010s.

Opposition to the transgender community has become central to a conservative backlash on social issues, helping to electrify the GOP's base to sweeping victories in 2024 and pushing some Democrats away from the issue.

Those shifting political winds have created a feeling of uncertainty and anxiety, even for LGBTQ+ individuals who aren't affected by changing rules on the books, said Eric Swank, a political sociologist at Arizona State University who studies progressive social movements.

"Just talking about all this change is detrimental to sexual minorities," Swank said. "Even if laws aren't passed … still, it causes mental hardship."

In hindsight, the legal victories over marriage equality feel inevitable: They were the result of activism and legal fights decades in the making, and afterward, the American public quickly warmed to the idea of same-sex marriage. Among political scientists, the issue is seen as a textbook example of a rapid, progressive shift in U.S. public opinion.

But at the time, bringing same-sex marriage to Arizona was a fraught and politically risky fight, navigated at times through bitter disagreements among different parts of the coalition.

When marriage requires political risks

Connolly and Pochert's marriage story is longer than most couples'. It began after

Goodridge vs. Department of Public Health, a 2003 Massachusetts Supreme Court decision that allowed same-sex marriage in the state. They bought rings together.

“We just put them away, because we felt that something would happen in time,” Connolly said.

In 2008, California’s Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to deny same-sex marriage licenses. So they went to San Francisco and were married by a pastor. But returning home to Arizona, they felt it was an incomplete victory.

“We came back and our marriage was not recognized,” Connolly said.

Officials in Pinal County refused to register their California marriage litually cense. Employers wouldn’t always afford them the financial benefits of a married couple.

“I mean, you can register a mortgage document, but they wouldn’t take our marriage certificate from California and register it,” Pochert says. “Whether that was the clerk’s prerogative, or whether it was the county’s situation, we knew then that there was something haywire.”

“It was embedded in our Constitution,” Connolly said. “Legalized discrimination against a group.”

Five years later, in 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned part of a federal ban on same-sex unions in the United States v. Windsor decision. Nationwide, there was a flurry of lawsuits and legislation to overturn bans, many of them successful.”

The couple wrote to the American Civil Liberties Union asking if they planned to sue Arizona.

“We got a note back, ‘Not at this time,’” Connolly said. “We figured they were just busy.”

Lambda Legal, a legal advocacy group that focuses on LGBTQ+ issues, was urging patience at the time. They wanted to wait until 2016 for a ballot initiative that would put the matter directly before Arizona voters.

Pochert and Connolly were skeptical. In 2008, not so long ago, voters in California had decided to amend the constitution to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. That was in California — a liberal stronghold — and not Arizona, which had reliably sent two Republican senators to Capitol Hill for almost 20 years.

So they decided to sue. A high-powered lawyer took on their case. Six other couples joined the lawsuit as plaintiffs, and other lawyers signed on to help, too.

“It was like a rock going down a hill,” Connolly said.

Lambda Legal was furious, the couple recalled. A representative from the organization was in their attorney’s office days after the lawsuit was filed, asking, “What do you think you’re doing?”

“My clients are tired of waiting,” their attorney responded.

The organization would go on to file a lawsuit of its own.

The couple became local celebrities as the case gained momentum and received

publicity.

“We felt like rock stars for the first time ever,” Connolly said.

At a wedding reception, they overheard a woman whispering: “There they are.”

Two young women came up to them, crying, thanking them for what they had done.

“It was so emotional,” Pochert said. “We really didn’t feel like we did a lot. Yes, it was a major lawsuit, but we were just ordinary guys.”

“I think that was when we realized what we had done,” Connolly said.

Both lawsuits were won in late 2014, overturning Arizona’s ban.

Aside from the political victories, there were the personal ones. Connolly and Pochert had family members who warmed to the idea of queerness, even accepting other loved ones in their lives who came out as gay. They are proud to set an example for others, simply by showing up together as a couple. Now, unlike when they were growing up, they’re in an environment where it is safe to be themselves: They don’t have to be afraid.

“I think the lesson really is, just, completely be who you are,” Connolly said.

Difficulty predicting the future

Maizy Kohler, 33, met her wife online in 2012. She fell hard for Michelle Winters, the first woman she had ever been in a serious relationship with, an energetic, social butterfly who “loves people” and doted on her when she suffered a broken ankle.

The couple didn’t talk about the possibility of getting married before it was legalized, but deep down, Kohler always suspected it would happen.

“I’m just an incurable optimist, and I was like, ‘It’ll happen one day,’” she said.

The couple got married on their fifth anniversary, within a year of the Obergefell decision. They both proposed to each other — Winters first, Kohler about a year later —“so we both have that special surprise moment.” On their wedding day, they argued over who would walk down the aisle second. They struck a deal: Kohler would walk down the aisle second, and her soon-to-be wife would carry their first child.

Kohler smiled when she recalled her dad’s reaction when they all watched back the wedding footage. He saw Winters, teary-eyed: “Now that’s true love.”

Eight years later, their marriage has settled into the easy and peaceful rhythm of a life partnership. They’ve nested into their home in east Mesa. For fun, they go to the movies, spend time with family and friends, and go to the pool. Kohler does the housework, and her wife, an energetic extrovert, manages plans outside the home. On weekends, she rises early and does the laundr y while Michelle sleeps in.

“There’s also the financial benefits,” Kohler said.

Kohler is the business manager at a local restaurant, a small business that can offer only limited employment benefits. Her wife’s corporate employer covers part of her health insurance. It’s a benefit only possible because they are married.

She doesn't think of herself as very political: She said she pays attention to big issues but doesn't engage with the news much day-to-day.

But she said that, more so than in the past, things feel hard to predict. She's troubled by all the "anger and hatred" in politics, and some big developments from the past few years, such as changes in the country's leadership, have caught her by surprise. She said she believes her marriage rights will stick, and that Americans will grow more accepting of LGBTQ+ lifestyles in general, as they have over the last few decades. But then again, she's been wrong in the past, Kohler said.

"I'm generally still positive, especially in the long run, but I have more doubt than I used to," she said.

She still attends LGBTQ+ community events, such as the Pride festival, and she trusts, and appreciates that the organizations take safety seriously. But it's hard to shake the fear that an act of violence could shake the events she attends.

"It's still in the back of my mind," Kohler said.

Some of the couple's dreams still lie ahead.

They want to start a family. It's been harder than they thought. Various fertility treatments have brought with them painful cycles of excitement and disappointment, and difficult procedures that were hard on her wife's body and mind. Speaking with a reporter in June 2025, they were down to their last embryo in a round of IVF.

"There's a lot of emotion, you know: ups and downs," Kohler said.

'We're in a new world'

Kohler isn't the only one feeling like politics, especially when it comes to LGBTQ+ issues, is hard to predict.

"We're in a new world," Swank, the ASU political sociologist, said.

In the textbook of progressive social movements, there are certain laws. One of them is that big political victories for social movements are typically accompanied, and followed, by a backlash: These days, young men in particular have grown more conservative when it comes to sex-and-gender politics.

"There has been a shift in public opinion," Swank said. "It wasn't like the (typical) progression, always getting more and more liberal over time."

"We could be on a precipice of, 'those were the great days'... but there's also a great ability to resist," Swank said. "Simply the threat itself causes great harm and anxiety."

Another pattern in the history of social movements: There's often daylight between a social movement's original goals, its eventual victories, its various factions, and, later, how it's identified by its critics.

Same-sex marriage wasn't the primary goal at the beginning of the activism that would help produce the Obergefell decision, he said. In fact some quarters of the movement, with its emphasis on LGBTQ+ "liberation" rather than rights, were critical of marriage as an institution.

Similar debates play out today: Whether to emphasize gay couples' political inoffensiveness and "sameness" with straight couples, or whether to lean into "anarchist, punk, radical" roots that pack a political punch into LGBTQ+ activism, he said. Likewise, the activism around transgender issues "wasn't about the right to play volleyball," it was about "not being discriminated against," Swank said.

'We're out, and we're not going back'

As the Obergefell decision neared its 10th birthday, the Supreme Court was widely expected to deliver a blow to the transgender community, which it did, June 18, by upholding a Tennessee law banning gender-affirming care for transgender minors. The same day, President Donald Trump's administration announced plans to shut down a specialized suicide hotline for LGBTQ+ youth.

Arizona's LGBTQ+ community is aware of the opposition.

"We know that there are groups that want to take away the right to marry," said Connolly. "We're going to fight it, anyway we can."

He and his husband don't think those lawsuits will be successful. But they're taking precautions just in case. In January, they got remarried in Arizona, thinking it will give them their best shot at hanging onto their marriage license in the event of a legal shake-up.

The Obergefell decision has changed the LGBTQ+ community, Connolly said.

"We're not taking this b------- anymore," he said. "We're out, and we're not going back."

"I think things are gonna work out for the better, especially in the long run, but I have more doubt than I used to."

Maizy Kohler