

ELECTIONS

Arizona House candidate involved in domestic violence incident, attributes to PTSD from military service

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A candidate running for the Arizona House of Representatives in the Aug. 2 primary was arrested on suspicion of choking a relative, an incident he attributes to post-traumatic stress disorder stemming from his military service.

Democrat Scott Podeyn, 59, is running for the House in Legislative District 29 in Surprise, part of Glendale and the far northwest portion of Maricopa County. He is the only Democrat in the race and will move on to the general election in the heavily Republican district.

Podeyn was charged with aggravated assault against a relative in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 2014. He was released on bail the day after his arrest; the case was later dismissed as the victim did not wish to press charges.

Podeyn, who said he has a medical history of anxiety, alcoholism and depression stemming from his military service, said the incident was a result of then-undiagnosed PTSD from watching videos of missile strikes while he was a weapons manager in the 1990s. Podeyn was awarded two military medals for his work with missiles in 2000.

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Podeyn's assault against relative

In July 2014, Podeyn, an Air Force veteran, was arrested on suspicion of aggravated battery after choking a 22-year-old relative following a heated argument. He was released on a \$15,000 bond the day after, according to the criminal complaint filed by the Albuquerque Police Department.

Podeyn said in an interview that he has "holes in his memory" of that night, when his relative said "something" to him and it triggered a violent reaction.

"I let go ... when my wife told me to, and went to sleep. However (the relative) had called the police," he said. Podeyn said the relative did not want to comment on the incident.

Podeyn said his job reviewing missile strikes in Iraq, Serbia and Kosovo sparked a downward spiral and led to various symptoms of PTSD, which he said was responsible for his behavior that night. He said that the PTSD was diagnosed after the incident, though he had suffered from anxiety, depression and alcoholism previously, as per his medical records.

The case was dismissed as the victim did not wish to pursue it, even though the prosecution had begun, according to the Bernalillo County District Attorney's Office in New Mexico.

"I followed the orders from the judge for getting treatment for my PTSD. One thing is certain — I'm a much better person because of that night and the help I received," Podeyn said.

Podeyn reviewed videos of missile strikes, which he called "extremely graphic and extremely disturbing," to check if the missiles malfunctioned and if they diverged from their targets.

"A lot of the videos that bothered me the most are still classified," Podeyn said. "I watched all of it because that's what making the mission happen required. I made it a personal mission to know everything about the weapons system."

Even though Podeyn was awarded the two Air Force commendation medals for his work with the AGM-130 missiles, he had self-reported himself a year previously for mental health treatment, which he remembers as being difficult.

Podeyn said if elected he wants to spread awareness of veteran's rights and mental health issues.

"It is part of the reason why veterans commit suicide ... because they just want to make the anxiety go away, make the flashbacks and dreams go away. But no matter how much they drink, they still don't go away," he said.

Arizona's primary is Aug. 2: Here's everything you need to know to vote