

Ann Arbor native moving from sports to politics in AZ

Hannah Davis, special to the WJN

Ann Arbor native Adam Metzendorf is giving up his dream job in order to run for Congress in Scottsdale, Arizona. He has an uphill battle as a Democrat in a red state, but believes the issues he's focused on will have bipartisan support and that he has a moral obligation not to stay on the sidelines when he can help effect change.



Metzendorf grew up in Ann Arbor, attending Temple Beth Emeth and Pioneer High School, and participating in the JCC Maccabi Games in 2002. He studied at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business and went on from there to work in the NBA. Though it was his lifelong dream to be there as a player, when that didn't pan out, he was able to use his business skills to work in the NBA. After seven years with the Brooklyn Nets, he was recruited to Phoenix to work for the Suns, where he's been for five years as Director of Membership Experience.

Metzendorf credits his time with the Suns (along with associated WNBA and indoor football teams) with having given him a lot of skills that transfer well into politics. "Think of it like a constituency: it's 10,000 people, it's the full political gamut, and it's \$60 million. And I was the person who had to develop the strategy and execution for retaining people through a global pandemic ... There are going to be people with very strong opposing viewpoints, from 'how dare you bring people to games in a pandemic' to 'how dare you mandate masks at a sporting event.' People applauded the work we did around social justice, and people asked for a refund because we had 'Black Lives Matter' on the court." He found that the best approach was to get on the phone with people and make them feel heard. He credits this personal approach to the team's 96% member retention rate throughout the pandemic, "even before the team was good!"

Metzendorf says his upbringing and his Jewish culture and faith have inspired his move into politics. "Carrying on our tradi-

tions and culture is very important to me. Seeing what happened to us, we have a responsibility to make sure that doesn't happen to anyone else. That's been my moral compass." He remembers being in middle school when, after 9/11, there was talk of building a mosque near Ground Zero. Many of his classmates said that was inappropriate; his dad, however, told him, "We're Jews, and we have a responsibility to make sure discrimination doesn't happen to anyone else. Tomorrow, you go back to your friends and tell them you support the mosque, and you support your Muslim brothers and sisters." It's been instilled in him throughout his whole life that if something is wrong, you can't sit on the sidelines: you have to step up and try to make a difference.

Scottsdale, where Metzendorf is running, is an affluent, educated, right-leaning area. The current representative there votes with the far right: he contested the results from the 2020 election, voted against lowering insulin costs, and is very pro-life. But, says Metzendorf, compared to Paul Gosar and Andy Biggs, two other Arizona representatives who were directly linked to the January 6th Capitol assault, he mostly stays quiet. "Because [our current representative] isn't one of those extreme people, he gets a pass. I think silence is culpability. I resigned from my dream job to do this."

Metzendorf's policy goals focus on bipartisan issues that affect all Arizona residents: enacting the recent bipartisan infrastructure bill effectively to stimulate jobs in the state; making renewable energy and the environment a bipartisan issue again; creating a southwestern state water caucus to think creatively and collaboratively about water issues; and improving access and lowering the cost of prescription drugs. The issues he focuses on "aren't partisan, they're human. I have a unique ability to bring people along." He wants to focus on inviting in discourse with people from across the political spectrum and find points of agreement that can benefit his entire district.

Metzendorf's primary election is on August 2. He invites people to follow his campaign, donate, or volunteer in Michigan through his website (<https://linktr.ee/metzendorf>) and to spread the word, even to people who can't vote directly for him. "This race is shaping up to be one of the few in the country where the Democrats can gain a seat in the House." ■

MI 11th District primary, two Democrats differ on Israel

By Joan Lowenstein

As if the Jewish community needed more controversy about support for Israel, redistricting has now created a Democratic primary in Michigan that pits two incumbents against each other, where pretty much the only issue that separates

killed by terrorist violence. If Israeli soldiers went into the West Bank to arrest terrorists, would wearing bulletproof vests bought with American aid be a violation?

Furthermore, under the Two-State Solution Act, any product made in the West Bank could not be labeled as "made in Israel." What's the point? The point is to facilitate a boycott of Israeli goods. Levin sees this legislation as a kind of compromise or bridge-building but interestingly, none of the members of "The Squad" is a co-sponsor or supporter. While Levin readily compromises on U.S. support for Israel, Reps. Omar, Tlaib, Pressley, and Ocasio-Cortez make no compromises. They want Israel to cease to exist. If you condemn antisemitism on the right, you have to be willing to condemn antisemitism on the left, and Haley Stevens is willing to do that.



This race is not about whether Levin is a good Jew or not, though he encourages this viewpoint by touting his Jewish bona fides, like how he was president of his congregation. Jewish experience is nuanced: Do you really keep Kosher if you eat non-Kosher meat at a restaurant? I don't criticize anyone for how they choose to practice or how they choose to support Israel. I will point out that it is misguided to think that non-Jews will understand those nuances and that's one of the reasons why I oppose Levin's stance. It makes it too easy for some to say, "See? Even Jews think Israel is an apartheid state."

Both representatives have helped Michigan. Levin is a labor organizer. Stevens supports economic development. They are not inconsistent but those on the far left often confuse the support of economic development with "big business." These criticisms occurred during the Obama administration where Stevens was head of the U.S. Auto Rescue Task Force. The auto industry may be big business, but Stevens' work saved thousands of Michigan jobs. Levin's work has helped guarantee the essential right to organize. I like them both. But all else being equal, I support the one who will stand up for Israel, and that's Haley Stevens. ■

Levin stands by and even supports Reps. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib when they deem Israel an apartheid state. Stevens has unequivocally condemned their antisemitism. We need more practical voices who call out antisemitism when they see it and don't let extremists hide behind an "anti-Zionism" stance. Anti-Zionism might have been an argument in the late 1890s and early part of the 20th century, but the goal of Zionism, the establishment of a Jewish state, has happened. Israel exists. So, anti-Zionism says Israel should not exist. This is Rashida Tlaib's viewpoint. With few exceptions (Putin says Ukraine should not exist and China says Taiwan should not exist), you just don't hear the argument that a state should not exist. No politician will gain my support without condemning antisemitism.

Joan Lowenstein is a retired attorney and served on the Ann Arbor City Council. She is a board member of the Jewish Federations of North America National Women's Philanthropy.