

Scott Rokos

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Hello! My name is Scott Rokos, I'm running for the office of Register of Deeds for Grand Traverse County and I'm humbly asking for your vote. Below is an overview of my experience that hopefully will earn your trust and confidence and in turn, your vote. I think when compared to my opponents, I'm the best prepared and best candidate for the Register of Deeds office.

I was raised right here in Traverse City, having learned to swim and fish on Long Lake. After spending time traveling the world I decided to come back home to raise a family like so many others that have done and I feel privileged to be able to do so. Traveling the world only accentuated to me how fortunate I was to have been raised in this special place, and my family has been blessed further, as we live in my grandfather's home he built with his own hands. My daughters are fourth generation in our home.



I earned my Bachelor of Science degree from Grand Valley State University, worked eleven years for UPS, and along the way gained a diverse array of skills in a variety of positions. I was a project manager in telecom, being part of a team pushing outstanding colocation leasing contracts through to completion when Sprint bought Nextel. This was a job I had to learn at lightning speed as I joined a team already on a project. I learn quickly.

I come from a long line of veterans, so when life provided me the opportunity to continue that tradition, I volunteered for the surge in Afghanistan. Scoring statistically top 10 percent in the military entrance exam gave me options and I chose scout. A few primary reasons motivated me to choose a combat job, one of which was a bumper sticker on a Marine's truck that said simply – "It can't always be someone else's child." I took that broadly to mean that it was my turn. I also read a story about an Army Scout who'd lost a leg after serving multiple tours of duty, and I thought at the time, that soldier had done more than his fair share of heavy lifting for our country. My decision found me celebrating my fortieth birthday on top of a mountain right on the Pakistani border, courtesy of the 101st Airborne Division. While there, I earned a Combat Action Badge (CAB) and an Army Commendation Medal (ARCOM) with oak leaf (second award) cluster. I am flexible and excel in any environment.

The decision to join the Army also laid the seed that led me to my wonderful wife Danelya. My wife is an immigrant from another central Asian country, Kazakhstan, and she was naturalized to citizenship during Covid. I am so proud that she loves this country as much as I do, and she's excited to vote in her first presidential election soon. If the American flag on our house has gotten flipped by the wind, she routinely tells me: "fix the flag." Danelya and I have two wonderful girls, aged six and three who attend Grand Traverse Area Catholic Schools.

I have been working for Grand Traverse County for five years in Equalization, now as a Senior Appraiser analyzing market data and valuing land and buildings. In this capacity I've also *been an integral part of the Register of Deeds process* by certifying the validity of legal descriptions on the deeds that come into the county for processing. This is all-important step is required by Michigan law. This deed certification process can be rather complicated *and for half a decade, I've been an absolutely necessary step in the processes for the Register of Deeds office.* Nobody in the Register of Deeds office can or will do it.

I also serve with the Michigan National Guard holding the rank of Sergeant, having left active duty and going straight into the National Guard in 2012. I drill at Camp Grayling's 40 Complex and am part of a team involved with providing training facilities and oversight on all training at those sites. In September I'm attending a class for the Michigan National Guard that teaches how to utilize a combination of software including Geographic information Services (GIS) to

designate appropriate firing points to include ranges, right and left firing limits, as well as elevation allowances for interaction with aircraft. I will retire in eight years from the military.

When you sell a piece of real property like your home in Michigan, law states the property must be identified and described accurately, and then the County Treasurer checks to make sure there are no outstanding taxes on the property in question. Usually, these property descriptions are relatively simple, but often they are not. When they are complicated, those deeds are sent to the County Equalization department for certification and as stated above, I've been part of this integral function for half a decade now. I've also performed the same service on amendments to master deeds (condominiums,) and when proposed developments need to change the shapes and sizes of various parcels within a development. It sounds perhaps boring I know, but it is a necessary function and legally mandated process. So, for five years I've already been part of the process, perhaps the most complicated part, necessary for the Register of Deeds office to function. In addition, I think I can say with confidence that I already have a good working relationship with all the staff in the Register of Deeds office, as well as the staff in the Treasurer's and Clerk's offices. I would be a quick fit.

Regarding the office of Register of Deeds, I have some ideas for how I would approach the position should I be honored with election. First, my time in the military has made me a victim and witness to many examples of poor, or even catastrophic leadership. I make it a point to use all those examples of what *not* to do. I've noticed many times people go into new positions of authority with a muscular ego looking to assert their ideas before they even understand the lay of the land, the people working there or their concerns. Usually, these same people taking on a new position of authority don't even know what they don't know about their new position yet still, they look to make broad and sweeping changes. I think the prudent course if I'm fortunate enough to be elected, is to keep my eyes and ears open and to walk softly until I get a very good sense of the office and it's staff, and in short, see how the sausage is made. I'd speak to staff, assess morale, see if the staff has any ideas about changes *they* think would benefit the organization, often they do. It takes time to earn the trust of staff, this isn't done with bombast starting day one. Anyone can make grandiose promises, I'm not interested in that. I'm interested in practical real-life solutions and possibilities, and nobody can know that until a thorough understanding of the office is gained. It would be most important to me to learn the job as quickly as possible, starting from the bottom up to the degree the position allows. The respect of the staff must be earned, luckily, I have a proven track record of learning new skills and concepts quickly.

One can always learn from others, and I'm a big believer of not reinventing the wheel. So, I looked around the state to see what other Register of Deeds offices are doing and I noticed

Kent County Register of Deeds has fraud alert. Our county, including the school system has recently been hacked and identity theft is an ongoing threat in this global community. I've spoken with current Register Peggy Haines about this with regards to property theft via identity fraud within the county, and she laments that another case happened just very recently. The Peninsula Township Assessor also told me about a specific case in her township as well, so it seems prudent to at least consider instituting this for the Grand Traverse County Register of Deeds office. Again, this is not a novel or radical concept, Kent County already has the opt-in fraud alert, and if there's a document that passes through their office with the name of an individual that's chosen to sign up for the fraud alert, they are notified. This can't stop someone from making fraudulent deeds or documents, but it will alert the people involved and if you are the victim, get you started down the path to stopping the threat and solving your problem as soon as possible. Often, your home is your biggest asset. If elected, I would seriously investigate the feasibility of this for the Register of Deeds in our county and if possible, work diligently to enact this sooner than later. It just seems to make sense. To the best of my knowledge, I was the first candidate to spawn this idea for our county, on the League of Women voters website.

I'm also looking at putting some kind of poll on the Register of Deeds web page to ascertain how the public-facing assets can be made easier for the public to manage, or perhaps improvements that might need to be implemented. Afterall, the Register of Deeds is a public servant, why not ask the public what changes, if any, might better serve them?

I'm a lifetime member of the local VFW like my father and grandfather, and I recently participated in the Father's Day Walk with my girls, sponsored by Saint Francis Church. My wife Danelya and I immigrated her mother into our home from Kazakhstan last year, and we have a busy home. About my wife, if I told you that even after my army adventures, I was the least interesting person in my house, I wouldn't be lying. If you ever meet Danelya (Dani,) ask her about her past life riding elephants in the biggest circus in Europe, or dancing in Turkey and Israel. She speaks a few languages and understands a few more than she'd like to admit.



I've been a public servant for the past fifteen years and have shown through my actions that I care very deeply for my country and local community. When I thought it was important to serve my country, I perceived the greatest need and volunteered for it regardless of the risk or cost. When I wanted to give my family the best life possible, I moved back to Traverse City. In short, I just don't say, I do. I've also shown extreme flexibility and an ability to take on and learn new tasks and skills, sometimes of a very technical nature, very quickly. I've also been a leader, responsible for real-world outcomes and lives.

My family has been in this area for a long time, and I can drive around the county and point to houses or buildings my father built. I feel a deep responsibility for this place and with your help, I'd like to take my turn being a good steward and servant for our area. However, if I'm not elected, I will endeavor to help the new Register of Deeds to any capacity I'm able. But still, I am asking for your vote; I know I can do the job well and it's my hope to earn your trust so that I can continue to serve our community in a greater capacity.



Thank you for taking the time to read this, from my family to yours have a safe and happy summer.

Very Warmest Regards,

Scott Rokos

Website below up and running soon

<https://rokosfortc.com>

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