

He Calls Himself The 'American Sheriff.' Whose Law Is He Following?

Charismatic And Ambitious, Mark Lamb Embodies A New Kind Of Trump-Era Lawman

POLITICO MAGAZINE — THE FRIDAY COVER By Jessica Pishko 15 October 2021 (@ 0430 Hrs EDT)

Jessica Pishko Is A Writer And A Lawyer Who Is Working On A Book About Sheriffs.

FLORENCE, Ariz. — The First Thing To Know About Mark Lamb, The Sheriff Of Pinal County, Arizona, Is That He Just Plain Looks Like A Sheriff. It Could Be The Justin Cowboy Hat He Wears Pulled Low Over His Eyes And His Penchant For Western Shirts And A Tactical Vest In Lieu Of A Uniform. It Could Be His Demeanor, At Once Confident And Aw-Shucks. It Could Be His Size — He's 6'3", 240 Pounds, Or So He Writes In His Self-Published Book, *American Sheriff: Traditional Values In A Modern World*.

In Public, Lamb Commands Attention. During A July Interview At A Local Café Here Decked Out In Old West Paraphernalia, Passersby Interrupted To Clasp Hands Heartily With Him And Chat. There Was An Older Latino Man Named Randy Wearing A Snap-Pocket Shirt Who Had Recently Retired From A Wild Horse-And-Burro Program At The Nearby Prison And Asked And Asked Lamb If He Knew Any Cowboys. There Were Middle-Aged Women With Salon-Styled Hair Hoping To Take Their Picture With Him. There Was The Waitress Who Told Lamb He Needed To Gain Weight. They Seemed Unsurprised To See Their Sheriff Talking To A Reporter And Flashing His TV-Ready Smile.

Lamb, 49, Has Jurisdiction Over Only Arizona's Third Most Populous County, A Stretch Of Desert Wedged Between Phoenix And Tucson That's Home To About 500,000 People. Yet He

Styles Himself As The “American Sheriff” — A Moniker Around Which He Has Spent The Past Several Years Trying To Build A National Brand As A Fervent Defender Of Law Enforcement.

Since Taking Office In 2017, Lamb Has Become The Face Of A New Online Streaming Service Called The American Sheriff Network And Of A Nonprofit Coalition Of Sheriffs Called Protect America Now; He Also Founded A Charity, The American Sheriff Foundation. Lamb Is A Frequent Talking Head On Fox News And Newsmax, Where He Derides President Joe Biden’s And Vice President Kamala Harris’ Handling Of Immigration, And He Has Spoken At Political Events Like A [Turning Point Action Summit](#) A Few Months Ago In Phoenix, Where He Quoted Shakespeare And Thomas Paine (“Tyranny, Like Hell, Is Not Easily Conquered”) And Promised, “The Sheriffs Are Going To Hold The Line.”

With An Action Figure-Style Charisma And A Growing Media Platform, Lamb Sees It As His Mission To Educate The American Public About The Role Of Sheriff, Which He Described To Me As To Protect People From “The Bad Guys, And I Always Say The Sheriff Is Also There To Protect The People From Government Overreach.” As Much As He Glorifies Law Enforcement, Though, Lamb Is Selective About Which Laws He Chooses To Enforce. He Takes A Hardline Approach On Immigration, For Example, But When It Comes To The Government Telling The People To Get Vaccinated — Or Declaring The 2020 Election Legitimate — He Fashions Himself As More Of A Vigilante Resister, With A Heavy Dose Of Anti-Government, Sometimes Militant Rhetoric.

Lamb Supported The “Stop The Steal” Campaign In Arizona And Has Expressed Sympathy For The Jan. 6 Rioters. He Has Called Vaccine Mandates “Garbage” And Spoke At A Recent Anti-Vaccine Rally In Phoenix, Where He Told Supporters, “We’re Going To Find Out What Kind Of Patriots You Are. We’re Going To Find Out Who Is Willing To Die For Freedom.”

[Ed. Note: You First, Sher’ff.] He Also Makes Direct Appeals To Citizens, An Effort That Looks Even More Dangerous After Former President Donald Trump Riled Up Supporters On Jan. 6. For Example, Lamb, An Ardent Defender Of The Second Amendment, Has Spoken In Support Of The Formation Of Private Militias — “Well Within The Constitution,” He Told A Group Of Supporters In March — And Emphasized The Power Of Sheriffs In Arizona, An Open-Carry State, To Call Local Civilians Into Service To “Suppress All Affrays, Insurrections And Riots That Comes To The Attention Of The Sheriff.” Last Year, As Black Lives Matter Protests Swept Across The Country, He Formed A Local Civilian “Posse” To Assist His Office With Law Enforcement, Even Though There Were No Such Protests In Pinal County.

Through Protect America Now, Which Was Founded By A Republican Strategist And Two Businesspeople Working With And Counterparts Nationwide, He Is Marshalling Dozens Of Other Elected Sheriffs And Citizen Supporters Around These Ideas — “Building An Army” As The Group Puts It. The Message: Sheriffs Are Here To Protect Your Freedom — Including From Your Own Democratically Elected Government.

Lamb’s Advocacy Follows In The Tradition Of “Constitutional Sheriffs,” Who For Decades Have Propagated The Idea — Refuted By Constitutional Experts — That Sheriffs Are The Supreme Legal Authority In America, Above Even The President And The Supreme Court, And That They Can Choose Not To Enforce Any Law They Consider They Consider

Unconstitutional. Former Sheriffs Joe Arpaio And David Clarke, [Along With An Estimated 138 Currently Serving Sheriffs](#), Are Self-Declared Adherents Of The Philosophy, Which [Evolved Out Of The White Nationalist](#), Anti-Semitic Movement Known As “Posse Comitatus,” Meaning The “Power Of The County.” Lamb, Although He Spoke At A [Convention For Constitutional Sheriffs](#) Last Year And Says He “Appreciate[s] Those Guys Standing Up For The Rule Of Law, The Constitution And Freedom,” Doesn’t Call Himself A Constitutional Sheriff. Instead, His Pro-Sheriff Messaging — With Media Savvy And Trump-y Politics Thrown In The Mix — Seems Designed For A Wider Audience.

There’s No Question Lamb Is A Performer, But His Calls To Citizen Action Worry Experts Who See A Segment Of American Law Enforcement Becoming A Power Base Of Its Own — One That Could Further Undermine Trust In Government Authority. Devin Burghart, Who Runs The Institute For Research And Education On Human Rights, Which Analyzes Far-Right Social Movements, Says Understanding Sheriffs Like Lamb Is Important In “The Long-Term Fight For Democracy.” Researcher Cloee Cooper Said Lamb’s Highly Politicized Approach To His Job Is “Ultimately Undermining A Safe And Just Society.” Asked About How Supporters Might Interpret His Anti-Government Messaging, Lamb Told Me, “I’m A Very Pro-Freedom Person. I Believe In Letting People Live The Way That They Feel Like They Need To Live.”

To Spend Time With Lamb Is To Realize Just How Far A Lawman Can Drift From The Law Itself — And How Little People Seem To Care, As Long As He Says The Right Stuff On TV. In Fact, Lamb’s Constituents Seem To Love Him: He Was Unopposed When He Ran For Reelection Last Fall And Won Another Four-Year Term [With 97 Percent Of The Vote](#). Some Locals Here Say He Is More Focused On Playing A Sheriff In The National Spotlight Than

Serving His Constituents. But In A Solidly Conservative Part Of Arizona, Lamb So Far Has Had Plenty Of Leeway For More And More Activities Outside The County. He Insists He Doesn't Have Political Ambitions Beyond The Sheriff's Office, Though. "You Can Actually Effect Change As The Sheriff," He Says. "I've Never Had A Desire To Run For Senate Or Congress," Lamb Told Me At The Café In Florence, Before Adding, "I'm A Patriot At Heart. I Love America. And I Will Serve The People Where I Can."

Another Patron Of The Diner Walked By. "Can We Start Calling You Senator?" The Man Asked.

"No, No. Please Don't. Sheriff's Good With Me," Lamb Said, Looking Abashed, Like Any Good Politician Should.

We Don't Go To A Shooting Range As Much As An Open, Sandy Field That Lamb Says Belongs To A Friend Of His. Pinal County Is 5,400 Square Miles, Roughly The Size Of Connecticut, And Much Of It Is Sand. Two Weeks Before, In Mid-June, The Temperature Was A Newsworthy 110-Plus Degrees. Today It's Closer To 100, And A Faint Whisp Of Cloud Floats In The Sky, Daring Itself To Cover The Blazing Sun. Lamb Loves It. He Wears Wranglers, Worn Cowboy Boots, A Black Shirt With Rolled Sleeves, A Fully Loaded Tactical Vest And A Brown Leather Belt With "Sheriff Lamb" Embossed Across The Back. He Barely Seems To Sweat.

We've Come To The Range Because Shooting Is Lamb's Favorite Pastime. [Pinal County Supervisor Jeff Serdy](#), Who Owns What He Describes As A "Very High Volume" Gun Shop In

The Area, Told Me, “You Could Not Ask For A Better Advocate For The Second Amendment Than Sheriff Lamb.” The Back Of Lamb’s Black Chevy Silverado 2500 HD Contains His Workaday Weaponry, Including An AR-15 SBR. On His Person, Lamb Has A 9mm Glock Pistol, Plus A Long Knife, A Taser, Handcuffs And Extra Ammunition, Including A Magazine With A Punisher Skull On It.

Lamb Says He Was Always Interested In Guns But Didn’t Plan For A Law Enforcement Career. Descended From A Long Line Of Mormons And Still An “Unabashed Member Of The Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter-Day Saints,” He Grew Up “All Over The World,” He Is Fond Of Saying, Including The Philippines, Panama And Argentina, Where He Did His Mormon Mission. In His Book, He Describes Spending Much Of His Childhood In Hawaii, Where, He Told Me “I Was A Minority.”

Lamb Went Through A Variety Of Jobs, Including Running A Paintball Business In Utah That Ultimately Failed. After Filing For Bankruptcy In 2003, Lamb Decided To “Start Again” In Arizona, He Writes In His Book, Where He Moved With His Five Kids And His Wife, Janel — Who Today Has Her Own Book, *The Sheriff’s Wife*, And Often Appears With Her Husband At Public Events. Initially, Lamb Worked In Pest Control, With A Focus On Pigeons. One Day, In The Mid-2000s, He Went On A Ride-Along With A Neighbor Who Worked In Law Enforcement And, “Armed With Courage And A Flashlight,” Lamb Says, He Found A Suspect They Were After Hiding In A Trailer. “That Morning I Came Home, And I Told My Wife I Was Gonna Be A Cop,” He Concluded. Compared With Climbing On Roofs All Day To Pick Up Bird Poop, He Says, Law Enforcement Seemed Safer. (Many [Job-Safety Rankings](#) Consider Being A Roofer More Dangerous Than Being A Police Officer.)

Lamb's First Law Enforcement Job Was With The Salt River Police Department In Neighboring Maricopa County Beginning In 2006. By 2016, He Had Moved To Pinal County And Decided To Seek The Sheriff's Job, Running As A Republican And, In His Words, A "Constitutional Conservative"; He Made A Point Of Opposing Abortion Rights In His Campaign, But He Ran Without The Same Cowboy Image He Has Today. The Sheriff At The Time, Paul Babeu, Had Faced A Series Of Scandals, Including An Affair With A Man Who Alleged Babeu Had Threatened To Deport Him If He Exposed Their Relationship. Babeu, Who Subsequently Came Out As Gay, Denied Making Threats, And A State Attorney General Investigation Later Cleared Him Of Any Criminal Wrongdoing, Concluding That The Allegations Were "Not Supported By The Facts." In 2016, Babeu Ran For Congress; He Lost, But The Sheriff Spot Was Left Open For Lamb, Who Defeated Babeu's Anointed Successor In The Primary And Took The General Election.

Once Elected, Lamb Promised He Would Focus On Building Relationships Within The County. "If It Doesn't Benefit Pinal County, I Don't Need To Be On The News," He Said At The Time. "If Fox Calls, What Are They Going To Do For Me?" But It Didn't Take Long For Him To Begin Leaning Into National Issues. Lamb Won Office The Same Year Sheriff Arpaio Was Defeated In Maricopa. (A Federal Judge Later Found Arpaio In Criminal Contempt Of A Court Order To Stop Racially Profiling Latino Residents, But Trump Later Pardoned Him.) Next Door In Pinal County, Lamb Embraced Arpaio's Anti-Immigrant Bent; Before Long He Appeared, Sure Enough, On Fox News To Talk About The "Border Crisis" (Though Pinal County Is Not On The U.S.-Mexico Border), And Deployed Officers And Equipment To Help Federal Authorities With Immigration Enforcement.

Since Taking Office, Lamb Also Has Appeared With The Federation For American Immigration Reform, An Anti-Immigration Organization That The Southern Poverty Law Center Considers A Hate Group. (FAIR Has Dismissed The Characterization, Calling the SPLC A “Partisan Attack Dog.”) Earlier This Summer, Lamb Gathered Some Two Dozen Other Sheriffs For A Protect America Now Rally Along The Border In Arizona, Where He Declared, “We Are Standing Up For The Constitution, Our Oath And The Rights Of The People.”

Lamb, Who Oversees A Medium-Sized Sheriff’s Office With 650 Employees And A \$39 Million Annual Budget, Sums Up His Core Beliefs, On Everything From Immigration To Policing To Guns, As Supporting “The Rule Of Law.” He Repeated The Phrase Often During Our Conversations. But His Interpretation Of The Phrase Generally Implies Opposition To Whatever Rules Or Laws He Deems Overly Intrusive. He Opposes All Limitations On the Second Amendment. When The Coronavirus Pandemic Hit, He Publicly Resisted Arizona’s Mask Mandates And Stay-At-Home Orders — Before Catching Covid Himself Last Year, Which He Discovered When He Was Denied Entry To The White House For A Meeting With Trump.

The Pandemic Has Given Lamb, Like Much Of The GOP, A New Pet Cause. This Summer, He Made A Short Video Saying He Would Not Require, Or Ask, His Staff To Get Vaccinated. (The Spot Got Picked Up On Fox.) One Instagram Post From His Account Reads, “No Vaccine, No Mask I Did Test Positive Though For Americanitis!” Underneath A Photo Of Lamb Leaning Back On A Bench And Smiling. I Asked Lamb If He Was Vaccinated, And He Told Me, Through His PR Representative, Corey Vale, To Print Exactly This: “That’s Nobody’s Damn Business.”

On Jan. 6, The Day Rioters Stormed The Capitol In Washington, Lamb [Appeared At A Rally In Phoenix](#) To Protest The Presidential Election Results. About 1,000 Trump Supporters Had Descended On The State Capitol; One Group Of Them Brought A Guillotine. In A Speech, Lamb Talked About “Issues With The Vote” And Blamed The State And Federal Governments. “I Don’t How Loud We Have To Get Before They Start To Listen To Us And Know That We Will No Longer Tolerate Them Stripping Our Freedoms Away,” He Said. Later, Rioters Broke A Window As They Yelled Out For Doug Ducey, The Republican Governor Who Had Certified Biden’s Victory In Arizona.

Lamb Insists He Has Never Said Biden Did Not Win The Election. But On Nov. 12, [He Appeared On One American News Network](#) And Said The Enthusiasm He Saw For Trump In Arizona “Does Not Compute” With The Election Results. And He Still Believes There Was, As He Put It To Me, A “Significant Amount Of Concerning Information” About The Integrity Of The Election. (There Is Not, According To Multiple Courts; An Audit In Arizona Also [Reaffirmed Biden’s Victory There.](#)) He Also Argues The Mob That Overtook The U.S. Capitol On Jan. 6 Was More Heavily Policed Than the Black Lives Matter Movement. (In The Two Weeks After A Police Officer Killed George Floyd In Minneapolis Last Year, [Some 10,000 Protesters Were Arrested](#) Around The Country, Compared With About 600 Jan. 6 Rioters So Far.) “I Don’t Think That Black Lives Matter Is Productive For The Blacks,” Lamb Also Told Me.

When I Asked Lamb Whether The Storming Of The Capitol On Jan. 6 Was An Example Of People Violating The Very Rule Of Law He Professes To Cherish, He Replied, “Just Because Somebody Was There Doesn’t Necessarily Mean They’re Guilty,” Then Added, “I Guarantee

You [The Rioters] Are Very Loving, Christian People. They Just Happen To Support President Trump A Lot.” When I Asked About The Roughly 140 Law Enforcement Officers Who Had Been Injured Or Killed While On Duty At The Capitol — Doing A Job Lamb Also Professes o Cherish — He Demurred, Saying He Hadn’t Been There And Couldn’t What Was Or Wasn’t True.

It Was The Month After The Insurrection, With Joe Biden In The White House And Democrats In The Majority In Congress, That Lamb Announced The Launch Of Project America Now, His New Coalition Of Currently Serving Sheriffs — Lamb Calls Them “Patriots” — [With A Stated Misson Of “Educating Americans](#) About How Our Sheriffs And The Law Enforcement Community Are Standing For Our Constitution And Law And Order.” It’s Mostly A Messaging Operation: The Group Runs Ads And Has Written Letters To The Biden Administration. [Protect America Now’s 69 Member Sheriffs](#), Who Come From States Including California, New Mexico, Virginia And South Dakota, Also Appear On Right-Leaning Media To Advocate For Smaller Government In All Areas Except Immigration. The Group’s Website Lists Seven Additional Sheriffs — At Least Five Of Whom Have Been Accused Of [Some Form Of Misconduct — As Advisory Committee Members](#). Lamb, Too, Is On The Advisory Committee, But He’s Also The Group’s Most Prominent Public Representative.

Robert Tsai, A Constitutional Law Professor At Boston University, Told Me He Sees Project America Now As Political In Nature — An Effort To “Leverage Sheriffs In Mainstream Republican Politics,” While Also “Branding [Sheriffs] For Future Political Careers.” Lamb Says Protect America Now Is Not A Political Organization, But That Its Efforts Are “Viewed As Political Sometimes.” Yet Protect America Now Is Not A Political, A 501(c)4, Was Founded In

June 2020 By A Group That Includes Nathan Sproul, An Arizona-Based Republican Strategist. Sproul, Who Has A Long History In GOP Political Consulting, [Was Accused Of Voter Fraud](#) Between 2004 And 2012, Allegations He Denied And For Which He Was Not Charged. More Recently, He [A Consultant On](#) Kanye West's Quixotic 2020 Presidential Campaign. Lamb, Too, Is A Client; His PR Representative, Vale, Is Employed By Sproul's Strategy Group.

Burghart, The Researcher Of Far-Right Movements, Sees Protect America Now And the Coalition It Is Building As A Dangerous Force, Arguing The Group Represents "The Next Step" For The Constitutional Sheriff Movement And Its Elevation Of The Power Of Sheriffs. To Date, The Movement's Largest Formal Organization Is The Constitutional Sheriffs And Police Officers Association, Formed In 2011 By Former Sheriff Richard Mack, Who Told Me The Association Has Attracted More Than 700 Sheriffs To Its Events And Trainings. The Anti-Defamation League [Recently Released A Report](#) Calling CSPOA An "Anti-Government Extremist Group " And [Citing Public Appearances Mack Has Made](#) With White Supremacist Individuals Or Groups. (Asked About The Report, Mack Said CSPOA "Denounce[s] All Racism And Violence.")

Mack Said Lamb Is Not An Official CSPOA Member, But He Clearly Sees Lamb As One Of His Own. In An Email, He Wrote That Lamb "Is A Constitutional Sheriff And Is One Of The Best Sheriffs In America." Lamb, For His Part, Says He Respects Mack And Has A "Good Relationship With CSPOA." But He Emphasized To Me That Protect America Now And CSPOA Are Different Groups, And Said He Also Does Not Support Any Form Of White Supremacy. Burghart Says The Distinction Might Be More About Style — That Protect

America Now Is Taking A “Slicker, More Palatable” Approach, With “A Much Better Sense Of Mack And His Crowd.

Lamb’s Nose For PR Is Apparent, And It Extends Beyond Protect America Now. Building Off His Social Media Popularity — He Has More Than 300,000 Facebook Followers, High For A Sheriff — And His Desire To Elevate Law Enforcement, This Past May He Announced The Launch Of The American Sheriff Network, Which For \$4.99 Month Allows Viewers To Watch 10-To-20 Minute Segments Showing Sheriffs And Their Deputies As They Respond To Calls For Service — A Mix Of Sheriff Propaganda And Reality Television.

Lamb Says The Network Takes Its Inspiration From “Live PD,” An A&E Show That Ran From 2016 Until 2020, When It Was Cancelled After Deputies In Williamson County, Texas, Were Caught On Camera [Tasing A Man Named Javier Ambler](#), And Ultimately Killing Him. (In Response To The Incident, [Texas Passed A State Law](#) That Forbids Law Enforcement Agencies From Partnering With Reality Television Shows.) Before Its Cancellation, “[Live PD](#)” Was [Immensely Popular](#), Capturing More Viewers Than Any Other Cable Program On Friday And Saturday Nights. Lamb Was A Fixture On The Show, As Well As A Host Of A Spinoff, “[Live PD: Wanted](#),” Which Focused On Catching Fugitives.

The Trailer For The New Network Features Lots Of Shots Of Lamb, His Profile Against A Desert Sunset As The Camera Pans Slowly Over The Shadows Of Cacti. He Flashes A Hollywood Smile As He Talks About “The Shine On The Badge.” Many Of The Episodes Are Filmed In A Low Budget Style And Feature Lamb As A Guide, Introducing Viewers To Other Sheriffs In Nevada And Arizona. Lamb Says The New Network Is Important Because “We Just

Felt Like It Was Important To Give [Sheriffs] Their Voice Back.” When I Asked If Lamb Was Concerned About A Repeat Of What Happened In Texas, Vale Dismissed It Saying That “Lots Of Things Are Out Of [The Sheriff’s] Control.” One Episode Features Deputies Tasing New Recruits As Part Of Their Training, And Watching As They Scream In Pain.

All Of Lamb’s Activities Outside Pinal County Raise The Question Of Whether He Is Making Money Off This Work. Protect America Now Is New Enough That Its Tax Filings, But Vale Told Me Lamb Does Not Get Paid By The Group, Outside Reimbursement For Expenses. (State Records Show, And Vale Confirmed, That Lambs 2020 Campaign Provided A \$10,000 Loan To The Group In August Of Last Year.) When I Asked Vale Whether Lamb Made A Salary From The American Sheriff Network, He Said Lamb Was A Partner Of A Virginia LLC That Produces The Content But Declined To Give Any Other Details. Vale Declined To Say Anything Else About The Company Or Provide Any Details About Funding, Revenue Or Viewership. He Told Me Lamb Does Make Some Money From Occasional Appearances At Gun Shows And Other Events But Likewise Would Not Disclose The Amount.

Sheriffs In Almost Every State Operate Independently With Limited Oversight, Giving Them The Freedom To Engage In Political Advocacy And Appear In The Media. The National Sheriffs’ Association, Of Which Lamb Is A Member, Has A Model Code Of Ethics For Sheriffs That Prohibits Using The Office For “Private Gain,” Among Other Things. I Asked Sean Kennedy, A Professor At Loyola Law School Who Is On The Oversight Commission For The Los Angeles County Sheriff, About Lamb’s Involvement With Protect America Now And Other Outside Activities, And He Said He Believes Lamb’s Behavior Violates The NSA’s Code. Kennedy Pointed To The Provision About Private Gain, As Well As One Requiring Equal

Protection Of All Citizens, Without Allowing “Personal Opinion, Party Affiliations, Or Consideration Of The Status Of Others To Alter Or Lessen This Standard Of Treatment.”

Asked To Respond, Vale Said Lamb Keeps A Strict Division Between His Work As The Pinal County Sheriff And His Image As The “American Sheriff.” Vale Added, “All Of His Activities, Both As Sheriff And In His Private Time, Are Vetted Through The [Pinal] County Attorney.” The Attorney, Kent Volkmer, Told Me Lamb Has Consulted With Him, Including On Protect America Now And The American Sheriff Network, But Said He Does Not Review Every Single Appearance Lamb Makes Outside His Capacity As Sheriff. A Spokesman For The NSA Told Me That, While The Code Of Ethics Is The “Basis Of An Organizational Creed,” Sheriffs Generally Rely On Their State Laws For Legal Guidance. The Spokesperson Also Took Time To Praise Lamb’s Messaging Skills, Calling Him A “Unicorn.”

Local Activist [Roberto Reveles](#), Who Through The ACLU Of Arizona Has Organized Against Racial Profiling And Other Anti-Immigrant Policies In The State, Has Known Lamb Since His Earliest Days As Sheriff. Reveles Hoped Would Not Turn Out To Be Another Arpaio Or Babeu. But Now Reveles Is Among Those Pinal County Residents Who Say Lamb’s Involvement In Politics And Entertainment Has Gone Too Far, Distracting Him From The Job He Was Elected To Do And Perhaps Even Influencing How He Does It. “He Clearly Has Politicized Law Enforcement, And That Covers A Lot Of Territory,” Reveles Says, Calling Lamb A “Self-Centered, Extremist, Anti-Immigrant Individual.” Some Pinal County Residents [Have Called For An Audit](#) Of The Sheriff Office’s Finances.

While Lamb Has Gotten More And More Scrutiny In Arizona, He Has Mostly Brushed It Off. [The Arizona Republic Investigated His Charity](#), Which Aims To “Bridge The Gap” Between Law Enforcement And Communities, And Found The Group Had Misreported \$18,000 In Spending — In Fact, The Charity Didn’t Report Any Spending In 2018. Lamb Chalked That Up To An Accountant’s Error. [The State Ethics Committee Investigated Lamb](#) For Intervening To Stop The Seizure Of A Republican Lobbyist’s Land, For Which The Lobbyist Was Behind On Paying Property Taxes, But The Investigation Was Dropped After Accusations Of Impartiality. [A Local Newspaper Also Accused Him Of Having An Affair](#) With A Woman Who Died Over The Summer In A Car Accident, But Lamb Denies That He Has Been Involved With Any Women Outside His Marriage.

Ultimately, Many Residents Of Pinal County, Which Voted 58 Percent For Trump In 2020, Align Politically With Lamb. The County Also Enjoys [Relatively Low Levels Of Crime](#). Out Of Five Pinal County Supervisors, Only One, Serdy, A Republican, Would Comment On The Record About Lamb, Telling Me Over The Phone, “As Long As The Job Is Being Done, Then We Support [His Other Work].” Lamb Argues His Outside Activities Help Him Bring In New Recruits.

Because Sheriffs Are Not Usually Term-Limited, Lamb Can Stay In Office As Long As He Gets Reelected, Or Until He Decides To Run For Another Office, As Many Other Sheriffs Have — Though Lamb Says He Is Happy Where He Is. While He Is Gaining National Attention, It’s Not Clear Yet Whether Lamb Will Become The Law Enforcement Equivalent Of, Say, Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Ga.) Or Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), But It’s Plain That He Has A Similar

Commitment To Trumpism And Desire For The Spotlight, In Arizona And Increasingly Elsewhere.

Lamb Has Appeared Multiple Times With Trump At The White House And Other Political Events. This Month, He Also Was A Featured Speaker — Alongside Clarke, The Former Milwaukee Sheriff, And Others — At The [American Priority Conference](#), A Far-Right Convening Held [At Trump's Resort In Miami](#). Lately, Lamb Has Been Supporting The Campaign Of Kari Lake, A Trump-Endorsed Former Fox Anchor Running For Arizona's Open Governor's Seat In 2022. (According To Vale, However, Lamb Has Not Officially Endorsed Lake Or Any Other Candidate In The Race.)

As We Left The Gun Range During My Visit To Pinal County And Stopped By A Gas Station To Hydrate, We Again Ran Into More Fans Of Lamb's. A Man With Tattoos And Well-Groomed Blond Facial Hair Wearing A "Proud American" T-Shirt ([A Design Sold By The Right-Wing Shock Jocks The Hodgetwins](#)) Ran Across The Parking Lot For A Photo With The Sheriff. A Group Of Kids Gathered Around Lamb's Truck For Sheriff-Branded Stickers. Another Man Walking By Said, "The Sheriff Is A Good Dude." Everyone Gathered For A Picture, Just One More.

###

Coming This Fall — 17 September 2024

The Highest Law In The Land: How The Unchecked Power Of Sheriffs Threatens Democracy

By Jessica Pishko Dutton — Penguin Publishing Group (2024)