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ELECTIONS

Natalie DiBernardo joins Gilbert mayoral race



COURTESY NATALIE DIBERNARDO

Natalie DiBernardo has begun the process of collecting signatures on nominating petitions to run for mayor of Gilbert.

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By **Tom Blodgett**
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The Gilbert mayoral race has a third entrant.

Natalie DiBernardo, a business owner and Realtor who is a lifelong Gilbert resident, has pulled papers to run for mayor. DiBernardo previously ran for the Arizona House of Representatives in 2022 as a Republican.

DiBernardo will join Vice Mayor [Scott Anderson](#) and political neophyte [Shane Krauser](#) in the race, assuming they collect the necessary nominating petition signatures. Petitions are due April 1. The primary is July 30.

DiBernardo only recently considered a run but said she was hesitant to do so before deciding to do it based on what she saw as a void in leadership through the town's recent problems, particularly with teen violence.

"Nobody understands how to deal with this kind of traumatic environment because it's so unique and it's so complex and it requires a leader that's going to be able to follow through," she said. "When the cameras are gone, when the outrage dies down, when charges, if charges get filed, some of that pressure is going to go away. But that pressure doesn't go away from me because I'm invested.

"I've experienced that kind of violence with my own family. I've watched my friends experience that kind of violence with their own family, and we need to attack it on every level over a long period of time."

DiBernardo's stepdaughter was murdered by the stepdaughter's boyfriend in 2017. He then killed himself.

But DiBernardo said the issues go beyond teen violence.

"Before the teen violence, everyone's complaints were the cost and what it's costing us to live here, traffic, parking," she said. "Schools are a big deal. I know the school boards have their own thing going on and all of that, but it's important and it is something we need to be on top of."

But the spate of teen violence in the past months has changed a dynamic for the community, making everyone feel unsafe, she said.

"I feel like this is the most unified the people in the town have been and asking for what they want," DiBernardo said. "I feel like the town is asking for leadership to make them feel safe."

Her message to voters is to get involved, she said.

"The police have quarterly meetings, get involved," DiBernardo said. "The school boards have meetings, get involved. It often happens when people are upset. They get involved for a short period of time, but no change happens in a short amount of time. Get involved. Stay involved."

But beyond that, DiBernardo called on the community to treat others with respect and model the behavior they want to see from others, calling that a missing piece in expressing recent concerns.

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"Don't wait for someone else to do it," she said. "You do it. Peace, safety, connection, law and order — all that happens first in our own homes and in our own immediate communities. So we're not doing that in our own immediate circles."

DiBernardo said she "adores" living in Gilbert as do her children.

"I am passionate about preserving the lifestyle that brought us here to begin with," she said.

We would like to invite our readers to submit their civil comments, pro or con, on this issue. Email AZOpinions@iniusa.org. Tom Blodgett can be reached by email at tblodgett@iniusa.org or follow him @sp_blodgett on X.

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Raised in Arizona, Tom Blodgett has spent more than 35 years in journalism in Arizona and joined Independent Newsmedia in July 2022 to launch the Gilbert edition. He is a graduate of Arizona State University, where he served as an instructional professional in the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication from 2005-19 and remains editorial adviser to The State Press, the university's independent student media outlet.

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