

Substantial Disruption



The Prune Juice Platoon

By Mike Tully

"I fought the whole war in Oklahoma ... You need to remember, there was not one Japanese aircraft that got past Tulsa."

- [George Gobel](#), 1969

It is just short of half a century since I enlisted in the Arizona Air National Guard and 44 years since I left with an (against the odds) honorable discharge. I'm proud of my military service; during my entire six-year deployment not a single Viet Cong made it north of Mexico (*rim shot*). In reality, my greatest military accomplishment was probably avoiding court-martial but, in any event, I have satisfied my military obligation to my country and state and needn't worry about it any longer.

Or so I thought. David Stringer has other plans in mind.

Stringer, a Republican member of the Arizona legislature from Prescott, whose hairpiece looks like it dropped onto his head from a balcony, wants every adult in Arizona, even those well into Medicare and Social Security eligibility, included in Arizona's state militia. He [introduced a bill](#) to eliminate an age limit for serving. Most states have militias, although the majority, like Arizona, have them in name only. Article XVI of the [Arizona Constitution](#) states, "The militia of the state of Arizona shall consist of all capable citizens of the state between the ages of eighteen and forty-five years, and of those between said ages who shall have declared their intention to become citizens of the United States..." A [Wikipedia article](#) on state defense forces lists Arizona's militia as "not established." Perhaps that is why nobody in Arizona realized that they were, by virtue of the State Constitution, members of the state militia as long as they were between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. All of us were AWOL and nobody knew. And at forty-five it didn't matter anyway – you were aged out.

But Stringer wants to age us back in. His proposal, [House Bill 2057](#), eliminates the age limit on state militia service. Since the current age limit is part of the state Constitution, Stringer is proposing a companion [Constitutional Amendment](#) that defines militia membership as "able-bodied citizens of this state who are at least eighteen years of age." There is no upper limit. Just turned sixty? You're in. Already collecting Social Security and Medicare? You, too. Were you born before the stock market crash in 1929? Get in line. Never mind if you're rickety, fidgety and forgetful, David Stringer wants you. The only restriction is that you must be "capable of acting in concert for the common defense," whatever that means.

While the prospect of enlisting geriatrics into an imaginary state militia might seem, at first glance, like somebody's rope slipped its pulley, it should not be ruled out. This is Arizona after all; it could happen. Accommodations will be needed and should be planned for. Older militia members, for example, will require Reveille twice daily: once at dawn and once after a nap.

The commissary will need two lines, pureed and non-pureed. There may be special uniform considerations. Elastic fatigues are a must. Camouflage will probably not be necessary; at our age, with our eyesight, everything's camouflaged. Finally, might the militia's elderly need special underwear? Depends.

Stringer's proposed legislation states, "The ability to call forth an effective Arizona state guard requires a body of citizens within this state who possess and are trained in the use of arms consistent with the purpose of the Arizona state guard." One problem: the guard has no purpose. The Constitution does not provide a purpose. It also fails to specify exactly who is in charge of the state's militia, although the Organic Law of Arizona in 1878 specified that the Territorial Governor was "the commander in chief of the militia." If the current Governor succeeded to that power, Arizona's militia will take its marching orders from an ice cream salesman. That could be a rocky road.

Stringer's legislation has nothing to do with the imaginary state militia and everything to do with an irrational fear among firearms radicals that the federal government is poised to confiscate lawfully-owned guns. His aim is raise a fictitious state militia as a defense, based on case law that recognizes that state militias are entitled to some deference when it comes to deciding what weapons are admissible for use by its members. He notes the Second Amendment begins with the phrase, "A well-regulated Militia," which the Supreme Court in *District of Columbia vs. Heller* stated, "implies nothing more than the imposition of proper discipline and training." That certainly fits Arizona, except for the "proper discipline and training" part. Stringer's gambit is that, by creating a more believable fictitious militia, Arizona can repel fictitious federal restrictions. He hopes that fear will overcome your reason – as it apparently has with him.

Even if Stringer's legislation becomes law, the age limit for the state militia will not be changed unless voters approve an amendment to the state Constitution. Good luck with that. Old people vote.