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CONTACT: Jeff LeMaster

(501) 683-1532

jeff.lemaster@arkansasag.gov

Attorney General Griffin Issues Statement on Fallen Stone County Deputy Justin Smith

Griffin: 'Deputy Smith paid the ultimate price while selflessly serving his community'

LITTLE ROCK – Attorney General Tim Griffin issued the following statement following the death of Stone County Sheriff's Deputy Justin Smith on Tuesday:

“The death of Deputy Smith is a stark and heartbreaking reminder of the risk involved with serving as a law enforcement officer. At the time of his murder, Deputy Smith was serving a misdemeanor warrant, a fundamental responsibility of policing. This tragedy demonstrates that danger is ever present for those who wear the badge. Deputy Smith paid the ultimate price while selflessly serving his community. I am grateful for and proud of the men and women who protect us every day and put themselves in harm's way to preserve a peaceful society. My prayers are with Deputy Smith's family and friends, the men and women of the Stone County Sheriff's Office, and the residents of north-central Arkansas.

“I traveled to Stone County this morning to meet with Sheriff Brandon Long, his team, Secretary Mike Hagar, and Senator Missy Irvin, offering them my sincere sympathy and support. I will do everything I can to support the Stone County Sheriff's Office in the coming days and weeks as they deal with this tragedy.”

Deputy Smith was shot and killed in the line of duty around 4 p.m. Tuesday, January 2. He was a 12-year veteran of the Stone County Sheriff's Office and was serving a warrant on a suspect when he was killed. The Criminal Investigation Division of the Arkansas State Police is investigating the incident. While the investigation is in its preliminary stage, early evidence indicates that the suspect, Clinton Hefton, resisted arrest and fired on Deputy Smith, who was found mortally wounded by officers who responded to reports of shots fired. Hefton is being held at the Cleburne County Detention Center with charges pending.

About Attorney General Tim Griffin

Tim Griffin was sworn in as the 57th Attorney General of Arkansas on January 10, 2023, having previously served as the state's 20th Lieutenant Governor from 2015-2023. From 2011-2015, Griffin served as the 24th representative of Arkansas's Second Congressional District, where he served on the House Committee on Ways and Means, House Armed Services Committee, House Committee on Foreign Affairs, House Committee on Ethics and House Committee on the Judiciary while also serving as a Deputy Whip for the Majority.

Griffin has served as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps for more than 27 years and currently holds the rank of colonel. In 2005, Griffin was mobilized to active duty as an Army prosecutor at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and served with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) in Mosul, Iraq.

He is currently serving as the Commander of the 2d Legal Operations Detachment in New Orleans, Louisiana. His previous assignments include serving as the Commander of the 134th Legal Operations Detachment at Fort Liberty (née Bragg), North Carolina, and as a Senior Legislative Advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness at the Pentagon. Griffin earned a master's degree in strategic studies as a Distinguished Honor Graduate from the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

Griffin also served as U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, and Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Political Affairs for President George W. Bush; Special Assistant to Assistant Attorney General Michael Chertoff, Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice; Special Assistant U.S. Attorney, U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Arkansas; Senior Investigative Counsel, Government Reform and Oversight Committee, U.S. House of Representatives; and Associate Independent Counsel, Office of Independent Counsel David M. Barrett, In re: HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros.

Griffin is a graduate of Magnolia High School, Hendrix College in Conway, and Tulane Law School in New Orleans. He attended graduate school at Oxford University. He is admitted to

practice law in Arkansas (active) and Louisiana (inactive). Griffin attends Immanuel Baptist Church and lives in Little Rock with his wife, Elizabeth, a Camden native, and their three children.

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