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ATTORNEY GENERAL OF ARKANSAS

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BALLOT INTEGRITY ALERT: Attorney General Griffin Reminds Voters, Canvassers of Rules Governing Signature Collection for Ballot Initiatives

Griffin: 'It is imperative that both voters and canvassers understand and adhere to Arkansas's laws on the collection of signatures for ballot initiatives'

LITTLE ROCK – With the deadline for submittal of signatures on statewide ballot initiatives fast approaching, Attorney General Tim Griffin reissued guidance on the rules that govern the collection of signatures:

“As the July 5 deadline for signature submission draws near, there will likely be many people across the state this week making a final push to collect signatures for various ballot measures. It is imperative that both voters and canvassers understand and adhere to Arkansas’s laws on the collection of signatures for ballot initiatives. This benefits all involved; it protects the signatures from being challenged legally and upholds faith in our democratic process.”

The law requires that canvassers:

- Be 18 years of age or older, a U.S. citizen, AND an Arkansas resident.
- Personally witness all signatures on the petition.

It is a felony for a canvasser to:

- Sign someone else’s name to a petition;

- Print someone else’s name, address, or birth date. If the signer requires assistance due to disability, a person other than the canvasser may print the signer’s name, address, birth date, and the date of signing. The person providing assistance must sign and print his or her own name in the margin of the petition;
- Ask for or obtain a signature when the canvasser knows that the person signing is not qualified to sign the petition;
- Pay someone to sign;
- Knowingly misrepresent the purpose and effect of the petition or the measure in order to persuade someone to sign; or
- Falsely swear to have witnessed all signatures on the petition page.

If you are approached by a canvasser, remember that:

- Only registered voters may sign a petition;
- All signatures must be in the signer’s own handwriting and must be given in the presence of the canvasser;
- Because petition parts are separated by county, signers should only sign petition parts for the county in which the signer is registered to vote;
- Arkansas law requires that a full and correct copy of the popular name, ballot title, and text of the initiated or referred measure be attached to every petition at all times during a petition’s circulation. This is so potential signers may read the full text of what they are being asked to sign;
- The information a signer provides on a petition may be disclosed in response to a records request made under the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.

We have received reports of canvassers leaving petitions unattended in public places. What is the effect of someone signing an unattended petition?

- This is a canvasser violation only if (1) someone signs that petition while the canvasser isn’t there and (2) the canvasser signs the affidavit in the bottom corner of the signature page. If both the foregoing happen, then two legal consequences occur: (1) people attacking the petition can argue that every signature page gathered by that canvasser be tossed out; and (2) the canvasser can be convicted of a felony for falsely swearing to have witnessed the signatures that occurred in his or her absence.

Regarding the collection of signatures on private property:

- Signature collectors should ensure that their ballot-related activities comply with any posted signs and are conducted with the consent of private property owners.

Any complaints or allegations of misconduct in the ballot-initiative process should be directed to the Election Integrity Unit, Office of the Attorney General at (833) 995-8683.

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 28 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 lives in Little Rock with his wife, Elizabeth, a Camden native, and their three children.

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