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## **Attorney General Griffin Partners with University of Arkansas to Secure State's Constitutional Documents**

*Griffin: 'It is well past time that we bring these historical resources into the modern age by digitizing them and making them available to everyone'*

**LITTLE ROCK** – Attorney General Tim Griffin today issued the following statement announcing a joint effort by his office and the University of Arkansas, who will be working with the University of Oxford's Quill Project to preserve historical documents related to the framing and ratification of the current Arkansas Constitution and previous versions and make them more easily accessible for research and public consumption:

“It is fitting that as we mark the 150th anniversary of the Arkansas Constitution, my office is working with the University of Arkansas to preserve and digitize the documents relating to our current constitution and previous versions dating back to our state's founding.

“Thousands of legal opinions, law review articles, and legal memos are written every single year without the benefit of the documents that we possess in our archives. Why don't we avail ourselves of the information that we possess? Because documents related to Arkansas's constitutions, the current version of which was ratified in 1874, are publicly available, but not

easily accessible. Someone wanting to research and read the documents must drive to their location and physically thumb through thousands of files.

“Not only are these documents difficult to access, but they also aren’t searchable. They aren’t digitized and, as a result, cannot be searched in the course of normal legal research as you would with cases, for example. While completing a recent research project, staff in my office spent several days rummaging through boxes of old documents, many of which are deteriorating and have been damaged over time.

“It is well past time that we bring these historical resources into the modern age by digitizing them and making them available to everyone. To do that, I am committing funding to the University of Arkansas to lead this initiative. The University of Arkansas will work in conjunction with the University of Oxford and its Quill Project that provides a portal for legal research involving all 50 states and the federal government and has established itself as the authority and leader on this type of research.

“This tool will revolutionize scholarship surrounding the Arkansas Constitution, providing a benefit not just to researchers and archivists, but also judges, attorneys, elected officials, and everyday citizens. This effort represents a collaboration between my office, the University of Arkansas, the University of Oxford, the Quill Project, and the State Archives. This is a monumental step for the State of Arkansas and an effort that will benefit generations of Arkansans to come.”

University of Arkansas Chancellor Dr. Charles F. Robinson provided this statement:

"As a land-grant institution, the University of Arkansas is dedicated to serving the people of our state and nation. Joining the Quill Project provides an incredible opportunity to fulfill this commitment by preserving Arkansas’s constitutional history and enriching our collective understanding of the foundations of American democracy."

Senior Research Fellow and director of the Quill Project at the University of Oxford, Dr. Nicholas Cole of Pembroke College provided this statement:

“Democracy is stronger in America than anywhere else in the world, and Americans instinctively know that it is because of their federal system. Too little attention has been to the history of state constitutions. The history of institutions is something that, in the last few generations, has fallen out of the curriculum. If you understand the history of democratic institutions and how hard it is to reach agreement over very difficult issues, then I think you have more understanding of why things have evolved the way they have evolved.

“A minority of the world’s population have ever lived under democratic government at any one time. Democracy is a fragile and difficult thing. I think this project is about not taking it for granted.”

Dr. Cynthia Nance, Dean of the University of Arkansas School of Law, shared the following statement:

“The University of Arkansas School of Law is honored to contribute to this significant project, which will offer Arkansas citizens, researchers, and members of the judiciary and legal profession deeper insights into the origins of the state's constitutional provisions. We commend the Attorney General for his leadership in pursuing this critical initiative.”

Dr. Colin Crawford, Dean of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s Bowen School of Law, issued the following statement:

“The Quill Project promises to be an outstanding resource for scholars, lawyers, and citizens in Arkansas. I was trained as a historian before going to law school, and I know that historical context matters to understanding the law and our legal traditions. Being able easily to access the sorts of historical legal materials that the Quill Project identifies is sure to lead to better-informed thinking about and understanding of the law.”

Dr. David Ware, State Historian and Arkansas State Archives Director, shared the following:

“Studying and debating the origins, intentions and the contents of state and national constitutions is an important, vital part of citizenship. Often, one hears assertions of constitutional rights or the original intent of constitutions’ framers, based on beliefs or wishful thinking, rather than acquaintance with and examination of the available evidence. The Quill Project will collect that evidence and promises to make it generally, conveniently available, which is a big step on the road to better general understanding of the ‘whats and whys and wherefores’ of our constitutions. This is a collection of good work – the work of archives, libraries, historians and any who love the principle of law and enjoy studying it.”

Jason Battles, Dean of the University of Arkansas Libraries, provided the following statement:

"The Quill Project is an exciting undertaking for the University of Arkansas Libraries and we are grateful to Attorney General Griffin for entrusting us with the task of incorporating the rich constitutional history of Arkansas. Our participation will achieve multiple worthy goals: preserve at-risk documents, bring these documents together into one searchable site, and add important

context to convention proceedings, related committee activities, and even delegate correspondence thus providing a more complete story of how critical documents of our state's history came to be."

Howard Brill, Professor at the University Arkansas School of Law and former Chief Justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court, said:

"The Quill Project will be of singular importance to attorneys and judges. I teach a course on the Arkansas Constitution and these documents will provide valuable background information. In addition, when I was on the Court, I authored a dissenting opinion in *Trujillo v. State*, 2016 Ark. 49, which required an interpretation of a provision of the Arkansas Declaration of Rights as it appeared in all five Arkansas Constitution. These primary source documents would have been of great help in writing that opinion."

Williams Baptist College Professor Dr. Rodney Harris, who has done extensive research on the Arkansas Constitution, shared the following:

"The handwritten 1874 Constitutional Convention journal presents one of the biggest obstacles for researchers when it comes to the present constitution. The framers of the Constitution either did not wish to spend the money to have the proceedings printed or they deliberately attempted to keep the public in the dark and we will never know which. I am confident that this project will make the intent of the framers better known and help shape our understanding of the 1874 Constitution."

### **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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