



TIM GRIFFIN

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF ARKANSAS

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Attorney General Griffin Announces 9 Arrests for Sexual Solicitation Following Hot Springs Operation

Griffin: 'Make no mistake, this is despicable behavior, and it perpetuates human trafficking'

LITTLE ROCK – Attorney General Tim Griffin issued the following statement after investigators in his office arrested nine men and charged them with sexual solicitation:

“Earlier this week, agents in my Special Investigations Division led a multi-agency operation in Hot Springs that resulted in the arrest of nine men, all of whom were charged with sexual solicitation, a Class A misdemeanor.

“As a result of information collected during our human trafficking investigations of illicit massage businesses, my investigators identified online platforms where men would arrange meetings with prostitutes to engage in sex for money. Some of the women who advertised on these platforms were victims of human trafficking. For the past two years, we’ve focused primarily on the supply side of these kinds of operations by going after the establishments where illicit activity is occurring. We have arrested seven individuals, including one mid-level ringleader, and have provided services to 30 victims. This week’s operation focused on the demand side.

“Make no mistake, this is despicable behavior, and it perpetuates human trafficking, plain and simple. And our work is having an impact. One individual said on an illicit sex website, ‘Looks like Fayetteville is about to be out of the happy ending business.’ Another user wrote, ‘Beware our state AG is on a mission.’

“I am grateful to Prosecuting Attorney for the 18th Judicial District East Michelle Lawrence; Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; the FBI; the Garland County Sheriff’s Office; the Hot Springs Police Department; the Little Rock Police Department; and the Arkansas State Police for their assistance on this operation.”

The nine men arrested were Vicente Santos, 46; David Hicks, 22; Jacob Benson, 32; Edward Freeman, 22; Antron Pearson, 37; Isaias Martinez-Sanchez, 30; Michael McConnell, 32; Carthon Cooper, 27; and Gustavo Gonzalez, 28.

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 is currently an officer in the Arkansas Army National Guard and holds the rank of colonel. Griffin served as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve Judge Advocate General’s (JAG) Corps for more than 28 years. 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.

His previous assignments include serving as the Commander of the 2d Legal Operations Detachment in New Orleans, Louisiana; the Commander of the 134th Legal Operations Detachment at Fort 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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