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**Attorney General Griffin Announces Senior Staff Changes,
State Senator Ben Gilmore to Join Office as Senior Advisor**

Griffin: 'Ben's extensive experience dealing with numerous public policy issues at the state and federal level gives him unique insight and will be a force multiplier for the office'

LITTLE ROCK – Attorney General Tim Griffin issued the following statement announcing the hiring of State Senator Ben Gilmore as Senior Advisor and other staff changes:

“I am pleased to announce that State Senator Ben Gilmore will join my office as Senior Advisor on July 1. Gilmore will resign from the Arkansas Senate and will continue to serve the state in this new role as a key part of my senior staff.

“Ben is a trusted friend and steadfast public servant. For the past five and a half years, he has served the constituents of southeast Arkansas in Senate District 1 with distinction and has sponsored key legislation that has made Arkansans safer, eased the tax burden on small businesses, and helped establish Arkansas as the most pro-life state in the country. He previously served as my Deputy Chief of Staff and Communications Director when I was Lieutenant Governor.

“Ben's extensive experience dealing with numerous public policy issues at the state and federal level gives him unique insight and will be a force multiplier for the office. His good counsel as my Senior Advisor will be invaluable, and I am proud to add him to the team.

“Additionally, Chief Deputy Ryan Owsley is leaving the Office of the Attorney General on July 31, and General Counsel Zach Mayo is being promoted to Chief Deputy. Deputy General Counsel Kevin Lee is being promoted to General Counsel. Ryan’s contributions to this office and the State of Arkansas across the administrations of three different attorneys general have been innumerable, and I wish him all the best in his future endeavors.”

Owsley joined the Office of the Attorney General in 2008 as an Assistant Attorney General in the office’s Opinions Division. Owsley was later promoted to Deputy Attorney General overseeing the office’s Civil Litigation Division, a role he held until the end of 2016. He returned to the Office of the Attorney General in 2023 as Deputy Attorney General overseeing the Opinions Division and was promoted to Chief Deputy Attorney General in February 2024. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Ouachita Baptist University and a Juris Doctor from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law.

Mayo joined the Office of the Attorney General in January 2023 as General Counsel. He had previously served as Criminal Justice Counsel for Governor Asa Hutchinson, as a clerk for Arkansas Supreme Court Associate Justice Shawn Womack, and as Deputy Director of External Relations for the Federalist Society. He holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Florida and a Juris Doctor from the University of Chicago Law School.

Lee joined the Office of the Attorney General in October 2025, having previously served as a Judge Advocate for the U.S. Army in Germany since 2019. Prior to his military service, Lee served as in-house legal counsel for the New York Stock Exchange and as an associate at Milbank LLP in New York. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Amherst College and a Juris Doctor from the University of Michigan Law School.

“Deputy Attorney General Darnisa Johnson, who has led this office’s Criminal Division for 24 years, will retire at the end of July after 35 total years of service in the office,” Griffin said. “She will be succeeded as Deputy Attorney General in the Criminal Division by Vada Berger, who has worked in the Office of the Attorney General’s Criminal Division for 33 years.”

Johnson joined the Office of the Attorney General in 1991 as an Assistant Attorney General and was promoted to Senior Assistant Attorney General in 1997. In 2002, she was promoted to Deputy Attorney General, overseeing the Criminal Division. She holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and a Juris Doctor from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law.

Berger joined the Office of the Attorney General in 1993 as an Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division. She was promoted to Senior Assistant Attorney General in 2019. She holds a bachelor's degree from Brown University and a Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School.

“Deputy Attorney General Tamera Harrelson, who has led my Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) since June 2023, is also retiring at the end of July,” Griffin said. “She will be succeeded as Deputy Attorney General by Leigh Patterson, who has served as Senior Assistant Attorney General within MFCU since August 2024.”

Harrelson has served as Deputy Attorney General overseeing the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit since June 2023. This was her second stint working at the Office of the Attorney General, having previously served as Senior Assistant Attorney General for MFCU. In addition to her time at the Office of the Attorney General, Harrelson worked as General Counsel for the Inspector General's Office, as General Counsel for the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality, and as a Division Chief for the Prosecuting Attorney for the Sixth Judicial District. She holds a bachelor's degree from Hendrix College and a Juris Doctor from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law.

Before joining the Office of the Attorney General in August 2024, Patterson had spent 28 years working for the Prosecuting Attorney for the Sixth Judicial District, including her last eight years there as Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney. She holds a bachelor's degree from Arkansas State University and a Juris Doctor from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law.

Gilmore added the following statement:

“I am thrilled and deeply grateful for the opportunity to continue serving the people of Arkansas in my new role with Attorney General Tim Griffin. Attorney General Griffin and his committed team are steadfast defenders of Arkansas, relentless in combating those who target Arkansans, attempt to weaken our laws, or undermine our conservative values. I am eager to join this distinguished team and contribute to their already exceptional work.

“During my time as a State Senator, Arkansas achieved many significant milestones, including safeguarding the lives of the unborn, ensuring education freedom through the LEARNS Act, implementing tax cuts, reforming our criminal justice system, promoting Arkansas's forestry sector, and ensuring Arkansas was prepared to compete in a global economy. I proudly served as the lead sponsor of the historic Protect Arkansas Act, a landmark piece of legislation that enhanced the safety of Arkansans, brought much-needed reform to an antiquated system, and effectively ended the dangerous practice of catch and release. All of these successes are a

testament to the promises made and kept, and are a result of the leadership of Governor Sanders, Attorney General Griffin, my colleagues in leadership of the General Assembly, and many of my fellow legislators. I've formed deep and enduring friendships, and Arkansans should be proud of not only the work accomplished, but also the character exhibited by many of the elected officials representing them in Little Rock.

“I have worked diligently to honor Christ through my service in the legislature, attempting to always fight with conviction, to speak truth with courage, and live with integrity. I have tried to live in a way that's worthy of His calling to serve, and I firmly believe that God has blessed my efforts in this endeavor. I am deeply grateful for the trust placed in me and truly humbled by the unwavering support the people of southeast Arkansas have shown me.”

During his time in the legislature, Gilmore served as Senate co-chair of the Arkansas Legislative Council and member of the Senate Judiciary Committee; Senate Agriculture, Forestry, and Economic Development Committee; Joint Retirement and Social Security Committee; Joint Budget Committee; and Legislative Joint Auditing Committee. He was selected as the GOPAC Emerging Leader for Arkansas in 2023 and also received the Jay Dickey Party Builder Award for his work with the Arkansas Republican Party.

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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