



**Jon Husted**  
Ohio Secretary of State

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**ADVISORY 2015-05**

July 29, 2015

To: All County Boards of Elections  
Directors, Deputy Directors, and Board Members

Re: Investigation of ResponsibleOhio's Petition Circulation Efforts and Petition

**SUMMARY**

This Advisory is to inform you that my office is conducting an investigation to examine the petition circulation efforts and petition proposing a constitutional amendment legalizing marijuana filed by ResponsibleOhio.

This investigation should not suspend or interfere with any investigation being conducted at the local level into a suspicious voter registration form submitted by The Strategy Network or a questionable signature or circulator statement on a part-petition.

**BACKGROUND**

There are significant disparities between the numbers of petitions and signatures ResponsibleOhio claimed to have collected to the Secretary of State's Office and the number the group actually submitted. There also are discrepancies between the hard-copy petitions and the electronic copy of those petitions.

These discrepancies come in addition to the reports from boards of elections about suspicious voter registration forms submitted by The Strategy Network, the group circulating petitions on behalf of ResponsibleOhio.

Ohio law protects the integrity of the election process by prohibiting fraudulent registration practices and fraudulent declarations relating to the filing of a petition.<sup>1</sup> As Ohio's Chief Elections Official, I must ensure that these laws are followed and hold accountable any person that violates these laws and jeopardizes the sanctity of Ohio's elections and initiative petition process.

Accordingly, I am exercising my authority under R.C. 3501.05(N)(1) to " \* \* investigate the administration of election laws, frauds, and irregularities in elections in any county, and report violations of election laws to the attorney general or prosecuting attorney, or both, for

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<sup>1</sup> R.C. §§ 3599.11, 3519.16(D), and 3599.36.

prosecution” by hiring Mr. David Bowers, Esq., former Prosecutor of Allen County, to investigate ResponsibleOhio’s petition circulation efforts and petition.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

I ask that you share this Advisory with your board’s legal counsel, the county prosecuting attorney, and respond promptly to any request made of your board by the investigator.

Additionally, please advise my office of any formal referrals from your board to the prosecuting attorney for investigation and/or prosecution relating to The Strategy Network or ResponsibleOhio. The investigation being conducted by Mr. Bowers is not intended to replace, suspend, or interfere with any investigation being conducted at the local level.

If you have any questions concerning this Advisory, please contact the Secretary of State’s elections counsel assigned to your county at (614) 466-2585.

Sincerely,

  
Jon Husted