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CITIZEN PETITION REQUEST

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To Council Packet Mailbox CLK <council.packet.mailbox@phoenix.gov>

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Citizens' Petition Request to the Mayor and City Council For the Promotion of an Equitable, Accessible, and Transparent Municipal Ethics Complaint Process

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council:

We, the undersigned residents and taxpayers of the City, respectfully submit this petition and request that it be entered into the official record of a regular Council meeting and that the Council take formal action to address the serious deficiencies in the current ethics inquiry process administered by the City's Ethics Commission and City Clerk.

At the most recent meeting of the Ethics Commission, twenty-one (21) ethics inquiry requests submitted by members of the public were summarily tabled—not on the merits of the allegations contained therein, but solely because the submissions lacked notarization.

Prior to that meeting, neither the official ethics inquiry form available on the City's website nor any accompanying instructions indicated that notarization was required. No space was provided for a notary's signature or seal. Only after these 21 inquiries were rejected on procedural grounds did a revised form—dated November 25—suddenly appear on the City's website, now containing a notary block.

Furthermore, the City Clerk has stated that the completed, notarized form must be physically delivered in person to City Hall during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday). This requirement imposes an insurmountable barrier for the many residents who work during those hours or who rely on public transportation, have childcare responsibilities, or face mobility challenges.

Compounding these obstacles, the new form contains language warning citizens that they may be assessed a penalty in excess of \$500 if their complaint is later deemed "frivolous." According to recent Federal Reserve data, approximately one-third of American adults would be unable to

cover an unexpected \$400 expense without borrowing or selling something. The mere threat of such a financial penalty has a chilling effect and will predictably deter legitimate reports of misconduct, particularly from lower- and moderate-income residents.

Taken together, these policies and practices—notarization without prior notice, mandatory in-person delivery during standard working hours, and the prospect of substantial monetary sanctions—create a system that is neither equitable nor accessible. Rather than encouraging public oversight of government ethics, the current process erects procedural and financial hurdles that disproportionately burden ordinary residents while shielding public officials and employees from legitimate scrutiny.

A credible ethics process must be straightforward, safe, and genuinely available to every member of the community it serves. When procedural requirements and threatening language combine to discourage participation, the process ceases to protect the public and instead protects the institution from accountability.

Therefore, we petition the Mayor and City Council to:

1. Immediately suspend the notarization requirement for ethics inquiries until such time as clear public notice and reasonable alternatives (such as electronic notarization or a sworn declaration under penalty of perjury) are implemented;
2. Eliminate the requirement of in-person, daytime-only delivery and permit submission by an online portal;
3. Remove or substantially revise all language threatening financial penalties for complaints later determined to be without merit, replacing it with language that encourages good-faith reporting;
4. Direct the City Clerk and Ethics Commission to conduct a comprehensive review of the ethics complaint process with meaningful public input and to propose revisions that prioritize accessibility, equity, and public trust; and
5. Report back to the public within fifteen (15) days on actions taken to implement these reforms.

The residents of this City deserve an ethics oversight system that welcomes, rather than repels, citizen participation. We urge the Council to act swiftly to restore confidence in the integrity and fairness of our local government.

Respectfully submitted this 3rd day of December, 2025,

Stetson Valley Residents

We request that this petition be formally received and that the Council place this matter on an upcoming agenda for discussion and action.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter of public trust and democratic accountability.