



Candidate Review Process

To request an interview with JoAnn Fleming, our Executive Director (for all candidates who will be on ballots **outside** of Smith County) or with our Board of Directors (for all Smith County ballot candidates), please contact maryanneaiken@gmail.com .

From our bylaws:

Section 9. Endorsements: Rules for endorsement requests outside of Smith County, Texas:

Now that Grassroots America has earned statewide influence, our endorsement is in high demand from candidates across the state. These requests come from county, municipal, and judicial candidates, state legislative candidates, and US Congressional candidates from across Texas. The volume of requests puts an enormous strain on the all-volunteer Board for judicious and thorough vetting; therefore, the Board has adopted rules necessary to allow us to judiciously field, vet, and render wise endorsement and recommendation decisions.

- If a **US House, Texas House, Texas Senate or State Board of Education challenger candidate** is not on Grassroots America's home-based Smith County ballot, they must be challenging an incumbent with a C, D or F across-the-board conservative rating (or an incumbent with serious, documented ethical breaches) in order to qualify for our Executive Director's consideration. Candidates meeting these base line criteria are eligible to request an interview with the Executive Director and should do so as early as possible by contacting her assistant (see website).
- If an **incumbent running for the US House, Texas House, Texas Senate, or State Board of Education** is outside Grassroots America's home-based Smith County ballot, and has a consistent, across-the-board A or B conservative rating, they may request a review with the Executive Director for a possible endorsement and should do so as early as possible.
- If a candidate is running for a **local government position that is not on our home ballot of Smith County, Texas**, they are welcome to request consideration; however, unless the race is of ***extraordinary*** importance to one of our constitutionally conservative affiliates, or of ***extraordinary*** importance in unseating an incumbent of documented notoriously bad character, or an incumbent whose record is in ***flagrantly detrimental*** to the US Bill of Rights (e. g. anti-First Amendment, anti-Second Amendment, anti-religious liberty) the local race may not rise to

the level of urgency required for the use of Grassroots America resources. Such requests will be examined, and a determination rendered on a case-by- case basis as time permits.

- Based on her three legislative sessions as Chairman of the Texas Legislature’s TEA Party Caucus Advisory Committee and her extensive knowledge of incumbents, challengers, and vital state policy matters, the GAWTP Board of Directors gives the current Executive Director, JoAnn Fleming, the authority to endorse in US House, Texas House, Texas Senate, and State Board of Education races for districts outside Smith County. She is authorized to use her discretion to endorse in local races outside our home base of Smith County based on her available time and resources to vet. She is authorized to use her title as our executive director in these endorsements because of her unquestionable dedication to the mission of Grassroots America. We also entrust this responsibility to her because we respect her diligence, trust her judgment, and have confidence in her long record of unyielding conservatism. **She is the only member of the Board of Directors with the authority to endorse in this manner.** Her endorsements are considered to be Grassroots America PAC endorsements and will be included in our social media and website postings, along with the required PAC reporting to the Texas Ethics Commission and the IRS.

Our Endorsement Process

- **Legal Status** - Pursuant to Texas Ethics Commission rules and statutes, Grassroots America - We the People is registered as a General-Purpose Political Action Committee (GenPAC). GAWTP is also filed as a 527 with the IRS. GAWTP has thus met legal requirements to endorse candidates at all levels of government and to take positions on proposed legislation, policies, ordinances, and ballot measures.

As a GenPAC and a 527, we are required to disclose donors, and donations to us are not tax deductible. GAWTP does not solicit donations to bundle for PAC contributions to candidates; however, we do encourage our supporters to make donations directly to our endorsed candidates and not to any political parties or their subdivisions.

- **Our Standards** - The Board of Directors of Grassroots America - We the People sets a very high standard for granting endorsements. Endorsement of a candidate is a serious matter. We do not make endorsements in order to participate in a popularity contest. We do not make endorsements based on appeasing interested groups, and we do not make endorsements based on political risk. ***Our endorsement process is dedicated to raising a higher standard for public office***; thus, we seek to determine the character, core values, temperament, judgment, management style, practical vision, and work ethic of the candidates.

Our standards require that we thoroughly and intensely vet candidates by checking into their stated qualifications, credentials, training, experience, and voting records. During the vetting process, we hold candidate interviews, forums and debates, attend/review forums held by other organizations, review candidate web sites, questionnaires, and candidate Facebook and Twitter postings.

- **Candidate Vetting Process = Job Interview; therefore...**

Grassroots America does not allow any candidate to send a surrogate to sit in for them in any part of the vetting process. If a candidate for statewide office is unable to meet in person, the Board will consider conducting a conference call or a remote visual interview.

Grassroots America does not provide candidates, campaign managers, or surrogates questions in advance of vetting interviews, forums, or debates. *Candidates should note that we consider it extremely bad form to ask.*

Grassroots America does not allow candidates, campaign managers, or surrogates to set the rules or format for our interviews, forums, and debates.

- **Grassroots America reserves the right to qualify candidates for consideration.** In other words, not all candidates meet our basic standards for consideration, and thus all candidates may not be called or approved for interviews. For example, if a candidate is found using baseless rumors, undocumented/unsubstantiated allegations, mud-slinging, and lies to promote their candidacy and to tear down another candidate, **their own unprincipled actions will disqualify them from consideration of endorsement** - no matter how much money they raise, no matter their other endorsements, and no matter their resume´ or social pedigree. If a candidate garners public and/or financial support from several officeholders with clearly liberal/progressive voting records or from political organizations whose mission runs counter to that of Grassroots America’s constitutional conservative mission, that candidate may be disqualified from consideration and may not be granted an interview.

While the GAWTP Board takes into consideration a candidate’s ability to raise funds as a “path to win,” that single ability is not our top priority. We will heavily weight the candidate’s work ethic and the ability to develop and work a specific plan for success. *If a candidate pledges to work hard to earn votes, and during the campaign consistently demonstrates willful negligence in taking personal responsibility to earn those votes, our support may be withdrawn if our recommended course correction is not implemented.*

- **Candidate conduct, personal responsibility and accountability** - As a 100% volunteer organization, we do not have the capacity to read every single social media posting ever made by a person BEFORE they became a candidate and even during a hectic campaign cycle; however, if we are given proof of a candidate’s history of racially-demeaning or any other intemperate, clearly unstatesmanlike conduct, evidence they have lied about their credentials, or evidence they have misrepresented easily-verified facts, the offending candidate and the candidate’s campaign manager will be called by the Grassroots Board of Directors for a hearing.

If the candidate refuses the Board hearing or ignores related Board communications for more than 24 hours, they will be automatically disqualified, and support will be publicly withdrawn.

If, after the required hearing, a candidate refuses an immediate retraction of misinformation by posting our required correction(s) on their campaign website and/or social media and releasing the correction(s) to the media in the form of a press release, they are immediately disqualified and support will be publicly withdrawn. The Grassroots America Board of Directors reserves the right to review all proof, evidence, and documentation of candidate misconduct and to determine on a case-by-case basis any actions of sanction, censure, or public withdrawal of support necessary to maintain our high standards.

- **Requirements for Levels of Support** - A Grassroots America endorsement means we are willing to put our own credibility on the line to support this candidate and will work to get the candidate elected. The term endorsement denotes, “I personally, and we collectively - as the Grassroots America Board, **approve** of this candidate’s stated goals, values, known actions, and known character.” A higher than three-fourths majority vote of the current number of board members (7 of 9 board members or 5 of 7 board members) in support of a candidate is required for an endorsement.

If the requirement for an endorsement is not met, GAWTP will not endorse in a particular race. This does not mean that all candidates are unsuitable. It simply means that no single candidate received enough votes. Grassroots America may post the results of the Board vote **in terms of the number** of board votes cast for and against endorsing a candidate. In the rare situation where the Board deems two candidates in a race equally meet our high standards, we will make a dual endorsement.

- **“Endorsement” versus “Recommendation”** - a recommendation means the vetting process yielded information that prevented a vote of endorsement - the highest level of support; however, the GAWTP Board may vote to **recommend** a candidate possessing the most favorable (or the least unfavorable) qualities for serving in the particular office under consideration. A 2/3 majority of current board members (6 of 9 or 4 of 7) is required for a recommendation. The GAWTP Board of Directors reserves the right to recommend candidates on a case-by-case basis. (A failure to endorse does not automatically trigger a recommendation.)

Endorsed or recommended candidates are advised that our support does not constitute a life-long commitment. A candidate must earn the right to keep and maintain our endorsement, which means his or her own actions have the potential to earn our continued public support or trigger our public withdrawal of support.

- **Documentation of vetting process** - The GAWTP Board reserves the right to record interviews with candidates for its own internal use (determined on a case-by-case basis) and reserves the right to post those interviews for public viewing.
- **Maintaining Independence** - While GAWTP networks with statewide and national conservative public policy groups and political action committees, and highly values and

respects the work of those sister organizations, GAWTP remains independent and does not endorse a candidate simply because “everyone else is doing it.”

Once we issue an endorsement, we will do everything we can to ensure these candidates are successful. Once elected, we will also do everything we can to hold them accountable for the oath they take to serve the People and for the promises they make during their campaigns.

- **Grassroots America does not take political contributions from candidates during the vetting and endorsement process.** The only exception to this rule - if Grassroots America schedules its annual Champions of Freedom Awards Dinner within an election cycle, candidates may sponsor a table for the event; however, the purchase of priority seating for such a GAWTP event is **not a consideration in our endorsement process**. There will NOT be any “pay to play” behaviors or practices accepted by Grassroots America.

After Grassroots America has endorsed or recommended a candidate for election, if a candidate wishes to help fund a “Get Out the Vote” event, Grassroots America will accept and fully report candidate contributions in an effort to reduce the financial burden on our members.