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News Release - For Immediate Release

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Grassroots America Calls On Joel Baker to Resign Office of County Judge Immediately

**“We need credible, responsible, respected outside leadership
to serve as interim county judge.”**

Smith County, Texas – Grassroots America’s Executive Director JoAnn Fleming released a strong statement after KLTU aired an investigative report this evening – a report exposing allegations of extremely offensive behavior by County Judge Joel P. Baker.

“After viewing the news report and looking into the credentials of the forensic investigator, the Board of Directors of Grassroots America calls on Joel Baker to immediately resign the office of Smith County Judge. Abusing his elective office in such a vulgar manner breaks his oath of office, severs the public trust, and makes a mockery of his role of county judge, probate judge, and overseer of mental health commitments. This unseemly abuse of taxpayer time and resources removes any vestige of respect. ***Joel Baker needs to stop taking paychecks from the State of Texas and Smith County and find another line of work.***

Because Judge Baker and the Commissioners Court remain under investigation by the Office of Texas Attorney General and the FBI, Grassroots America believes Smith County needs a credible, responsible, respected leader from outside county government to serve as interim county judge. Over the past several months, we’ve heard from numerous sources that members of the Commissioners Court plan to have Precinct One Commissioner Jeff Warr vacate his seat to serve out Baker’s term as county judge, should Baker be forced to resign. The Commissioners Court would then be in a position to appoint an interim county commissioner to serve until a special election could be called for Precinct One Commissioner. **If this is true, we could not disagree more.**

Any conversation about planning to fill a vacancy on the Court should take place in public. In fact, the Texas Open Meetings Act **prohibits** commissioners from discussing such important matters outside a public meeting; therefore, Grassroots America strongly recommends the Commissioners Court solicit applications and resumes from Smith County citizens who are interested in serving as interim county judge. The Commissioners Court should review those applications and resumes and interview the applicants in a public meeting.

No member of the Grassroots America Board of Directors plans to apply for the position or run for the office.”