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Unwanted And Unneeded Bonita Marijuana Facility Goes To Graham County Voters. Referendum Certificated By County Recorder

The Issue Will Appear On November 2022 Ballot But Supervisors Can Still Rescind Unpopular Approval

(Safford, AZ) Voters in Graham County will now decide the fate of an unpopular and unneeded marijuana operation that had been planned for Bonita. The Graham County Recorder has determined there are enough valid signatures to place the referendum on the ballot, with the question likely to be on the November 2022 ballot. The Graham County Board of Supervisors can forgo an election, however, by rescinding their approval of the marijuana operation. Given the unpopularity of recreational marijuana in Graham County, voters are likely to reject the Bonita pot facility. Last year voters in Graham County voted against Proposition 207, the legalization of recreational marijuana, by the largest margin in Arizona, 57% to 43%. It failed in Bonita by nearly three-to-one.

Despite the will of the voters and opposition from residents, the Graham County Board of Supervisors approved the Bonita marijuana facility in June. County Supervisor Danny Smith, whose district includes Bonita, voted no. Supervisors Paul David and John Howard voted yes. The Graham County Planning and Zoning Commission **twice rejected** the facility; in December 2020 with a vote of 7 to 1, and in June 2021 with a vote of 5 to 1.

On July 27th, 2,288 signatures were handed in to the Graham County Clerk. That is twice the 1,064 valid signatures required. The signatures were handed in well in advance of the county's August 5th deadline. The County Recorder conducted a random sample of 113 signatures and found nearly 80% to be qualified. The next step is for the Graham County Board of Supervisors to call the election.

The Chairman of the PAC leading the effort, George Khalaf said, "The people of Graham County continue to send the same message to their elected leaders. They opposed recreational marijuana in 2020 and they do not want a giant marijuana grow operation in Bonita. The referendum is indeed a milestone as residents stand up to pro-pot special interests."

Khalaf was involved in the campaign to defeat Proposition 207 last year.

Khalaf is urging the Graham County Board of Supervisors to respect the will of the people, avoid a contentious election, and rescind their previous approval of the Bonita facility, "The people have spoken, it's up to the Board of Supervisors to listen. Rescinding the approval is not only legal, but also the right thing to do at this point."

Khalaf also indicated his support for another group's effort to establish a new tax on marijuana in Graham County. Khalaf said his group is strongly considering launching its own petition drive in support of the idea and would almost assuredly do so, if opponents of his Bonita referendum successfully sue to keep his referendum off the ballot. As such, a marijuana tax initiative would have another ten months to qualify for the ballot.