**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Magnolia ISD, Montgomery County, Texas, Refuses to Follow Statutes and Allow a Citizen Led Petition Requesting a Hand Recount on Recent School Bond Initiative**

**MAGNOLIA, TEXAS –** Montgomery County Citizens Defending Freedom (CCDF-Montgomery) is sounding the alarm on a local issue regarding election integrity. Montgomery County, Texas implemented the newly purchased voting system, Hart InterCivic Verity Duo, for November’s General Election. Magnolia Independent School District (MISD) contracted with the county to facilitate the election of their school bond propositions. One of the bond propositions, Proposition A, passed by a mere 938 votes, which qualified the initiative for a hand recount, according to the Texas Election Code. This presented an opportunity for the community to proceed with a requested recount petition, in hopes of a chance to audit the new voting machines.

Cindy Gaskill, an election integrity advocate, led a direct effort of local citizens in the process of gathering the signatures and paperwork needed. The Texas Election Code requires citizens to pay for the hourly wages of the workers needed to facilitate the hand recount. After a petition was filed and the recount ordered, an estimate of $60 was provided as the cost for completing the recount.

After the Magnolia ISD School Board canvassed the votes for the Propositions at the Special Session held November 17, 2022, the deadline for the petition and deposit was set for November 21, 2022, by 5:00pm. Ms. Gaskill arrived at the Elections Department on Friday, November 18 and she was informed that the original amount of $60 was incorrect, and the correct deposit amount required was now $2,100.

By Sunday evening, November 20, 2022, enough funds were raised for the deposit needed. Despite extensive efforts and continuous redirections between the Elections Department and the MISD School Board President Chuck Adcox, Chris Hinkelman the Superintendent Secretary in the School Administration office adamantly refused to accept any paperwork or money for the recount in an attempt to deny citizens the right of having the recount performed. This was an astounding and mind-baffling response. Ms. Hinkelman’s reasoning was that it was initially filed with the Elections Department. She stated, “They haven’t told me anything and neither has my attorney.” Despite Ms. Gaskill explaining that this was based on the advice provided by the Secretary of State’s office, with the goal of all parties avoiding going to court, Ms. Hinkelman still refused.

This is a clear example of bureaucratic abuse of office from our elected officials despite citizens taking the time and effort to follow the necessary procedures to obtain transparency.

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