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News Release

"We work together to build and maintain a community of the highest quality for present and future generations."

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MEDIA CONTACTS:

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Alaisha Montanez, Communications Manager

Ph: 325-676-6677 Cell: 325-665-8532 E-mail: alaisha.montanez@abilenetx.gov

Campaign Signs

ABILENE, Texas - In 2015, the US Supreme Court issued a ruling in *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* that severely restricted the ability of local, state and federal governments to regulate signs. The ruling, issued by Justice Thomas, held that government, including local government, may not regulate the "content" of signs (i.e. a First Amendment issue) without a compelling state interest.

Therefore, the City of Abilene's ordinance regulating "political signs" in "residential" areas is unenforceable due to the US Supreme Court's ruling.

Stanley Smith, City Attorney said, "It is my understanding that the City of Abilene has not enforced this ordinance for the past 2 years (i.e. 2017 & 2016 elections). It is also my understanding that the State of Texas (TXDOT) may still enforce state regulations of political signs on state highways, although a recent Texas Court of Appeals determined that such enforcement violated the US Supreme Court's ruling."

In a memo to the Candidates for City Council, City Manager Robert Hanna stated, "Except for the times City Hall or other City property is used as a polling location, campaign signs are prohibited on City property, and City facilities.

In addition to this general prohibition, the City has essentially maintained a hands-off practice when it comes to political signs in the public rights-of-way.

Unless a sign is obstructing the view of an intersection for motorists, on the property of a city facility or parcel of land, or somehow implies by its placement on ROW or city-owned land that the City of Abilene is endorsing a candidate for public office, we have left campaign signs alone for the most part.

I do not think it is wise to alter this long standing practice in the middle of campaign season. However, I will be asking the City Council to provide direction on this practice after the election is over, and I will apply that direction in all future elections.

All of that said, the City reserves the right to remove any sign from a public right of way if in its sole discretion, it impairs the vision of drivers or otherwise endangers the public safety. I very much appreciate your cooperation here."

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