

FEB 09 2023

CLERK OF COURT

DISTRICT COURT  
COUNTY OF DENVER  
STATE OF COLORADO      23CR00835

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AFFIDAVIT OF PROBABLE CAUSE FOR ARREST WARRANT

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1. Your affiant, Chris Byrne, a Criminal Investigator with the Special Prosecutions Unit of the Colorado Attorney General's Office, a peace officer, being duly sworn upon oath, says that the facts stated herein are true.
2. Your affiant is a criminal investigator and commissioned peace officer employed by the Colorado Attorney General, assigned to the Special Prosecutions Unit, Criminal Justice Section. Your affiant has been employed as a peace officer for over 26 years, most recently as a Colorado Attorney General Criminal Investigator, investigating complex felony crimes, and other violations of the Colorado Revised Statutes.
3. Your affiant has probable cause to believe that:

DIANA ELLEN WATT

DOB [REDACTED]

SSN [REDACTED]

described as an adult [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED], has committed the offenses outlined in the attached Felony Complaint and Information.

These offenses are:

**COUNT ONE:**                      ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE A PUBLIC SERVANT  
§ 18-8-306 C.R.S. (Class 4 Felony)

**COUNT TWO:**                      PERJURY  
§§ 1-13-104 and 18-8-503, C.R.S.  
(Class 2 Misdemeanor)

REASONS FOR MY BELIEF:

On 6/15/2022, Colorado Deputy Secretary of State Chris Beall, 1700 Broadway, Suite 550, in the City and County of Denver, State of Colorado, provided me with a referral of allegations of misconduct by petition circulators employed by Grassfire, LLC (Grassfire) in 2022 in the State of Colorado. Grassfire has a Petition Entity license issued by the State of Colorado, which lists their address as 2660 NE Hwy. 20, Suite 610, #315, Bend, OR 97701. The information provided by Deputy Secretary Beall included spreadsheets and images of campaign petitions generated by the Colorado Secretary of State's Office (SOS). According to Deputy Secretary Beall, Grassfire was hired by the campaign of Carl Andersen for Congress to circulate a petition to gather the necessary 1,500 signatures for Andersen to be placed on the 2022 Republican primary ballot for Colorado's US House of Representatives 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District seat. SOS rejected the petition because it lacked the necessary 1,500 valid voter signatures to be included on the ballot. Through its internal screening processes, SOS determined there was an unusually high number of signatures on the Andersen petition that did not match voter signatures in SOS files. There were also a number of signatures on the Andersen petition for people SOS records indicated were deceased. Upon review, I found six petition circulators had collected names and signatures for 21 deceased people on the Andersen petition. This information was as follows:

| <u>Signature</u> | <u>Section/Line</u> | <u>Circulator</u> | <u>Notary</u>       |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Ester Brown      | 1/5                 | Alex Joseph       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Joy Jackson      | 9/17                | Alex Joseph       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Lowell Gordon    | 11/24               | Terris Kintchen   | Austin Twaddle      |
| David Walker     | 11/25               | Terris Kintchen   | Austin Twaddle      |
| Joanne Hite      | 17/6                | Patrick Rimpel    | Austin Twaddle      |
| Donna Plock      | 37/12               | Alex Joseph       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Carolyn Utley    | 37/29               | Alex Joseph       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Helen Betz       | 46/18               | Terris Kintchen   | Austin Twaddle      |
| Larean Hess      | 49/19               | Patrick Rimpel    | Austin Twaddle      |
| Sandra Misunas   | 61/21               | Aliyah Moss       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Judy Hart        | 73/14               | Alex Joseph       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Vicki Wyban      | 77/15               | Terris Kintchen   | Austin Twaddle      |
| Rebecca Winters  | 77/20               | Terris Kintchen   | Austin Twaddle      |
| Robert King      | 83/4                | Jordahni Rimpel   | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Louise Perry     | 86/5                | Jordahni Rimpel   | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Nelle Fickel     | 98/15               | Aliyah Moss       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Tammy McDonald   | 98/20               | Aliyah Moss       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Frances Papes    | 101/8               | Jordahni Rimpel   | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Darlene Wilson   | 177/5               | Diana Watt        | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Ryan Evans       | 178/14              | Diana Watt        | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Gerald Rich      | 178/24              | Diana Watt        | Abolghasem Esmaeili |

As I examined the Andersen petition images, I saw the petition was divided into sections with spaces for up to 30 voter signatures and ended with the following affidavit:

**AFFIDAVIT OF CIRCULATOR**

I do solemnly affirm under penalty of perjury that:

- I have read and understand the laws governing the circulation of petitions;
- I was a citizen of the United States and at least 18 years of age at the time this section of the petition was circulated and signed by the listed electors;
- I circulated this section of the petition;
- Each signature on this petition was affixed in my presence;
- Each signature on this petition is the signature of the person whose name it purports to be;
- To the best of my knowledge and belief each of the persons signing this petition section was, at the time of signing, an eligible elector;
- I have not paid or will not in the future pay and I believe that no other person has paid or will pay, directly or indirectly, any money or other thing of value to any signer for the purpose of inducing or causing such signer to affix his or her signature to the petition.
- I understand that I can be prosecuted for violating the laws governing the circulation of petitions, including the requirement that a circulator truthfully completed the affidavit and that each signature on the petition was affixed in the circulator's presence; and
- I understand that failing to make myself available to be deposed and to provide testimony in the event of a protest shall invalidate the petition section if it is challenged on the grounds of circulator fraud.

**Circulator Name** (please print)

|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
|           |            |
| Last Name | First Name |

**Permanent Residence Address** (or location if homeless)

|  |           |        |       |          |
|--|-----------|--------|-------|----------|
|  |           |        |       |          |
| Street name and number (no P.O. Boxes) | City/Town | County | State | Zip Code |

On 7/12/2022, I obtained death certificates for the individuals identified as deceased voters listed on page two of this affidavit from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), except for McDonald. CDPHE advised that no record for McDonald was found. Upon further investigation, I learned McDonald likely moved to Texas in 2019. So, I requested McDonald's death record from the Texas Department of State Health Services Center, which I received on 7/20/2022. Review of the death records I received showed the dates of death for all of those voters listed on page two of this affidavit preceded the dates their signatures appeared on the Andersen campaign petition.

I reviewed the Andersen campaign petition and found numerous examples of names, addresses, and signatures that appeared multiple times in different handwriting on the petition. Many of the same circulator names associated with them were also associated with the names of the deceased voters noted above. The following is a representative sample of names of note on the Andersen petition (names with an \* were misspelled on the petition):

| <u>Signature</u> | <u>Section/Line</u> | <u>Circulator</u> | <u>Notary</u>       |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Golam Maruf      | 9/7                 | Alex Joseph       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Golam Maruf      | 111/27              | Jordahni Rimpel   | Austin Twaddle      |
| Golam Maruf      | 176/13              | Johnny Albertie   | Austin Twaddle      |
| Golam Maruf      | 178/20              | Diana Watt        | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Evan Price       | 1/1                 | Alex Joseph       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Evan Price       | 13/17               | Terris Kintchen   | Austin Twaddle      |
| Evan Price       | 38/12               | Alex Joseph       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Evan Price       | 178/7               | Diana Watt        | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Wayne Balliett   | 68/5                | Terris Kintchen   | Austin Twaddle      |
| Wayne Balliett*  | 96/10               | Alex Joseph       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Wayne Balliett   | 144/25              | Terris Kintchen   | Austin Twaddle      |
| Darren Brinkman  | 38/5                | Alex Joseph       | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Darren Brinkman  | 128/8               | Terris Kintchen   | Austin Twaddle      |
| Darren Brinkman  | 181/13              | Diana Watt        | Abolghasem Esmaeili |

|                  |        |                 |                     |
|------------------|--------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Clayton Sims     | 37/20  | Alex Joseph     | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Clayton Sims*    | 51/19  | Patrick Rimpel  | Austin Twaddle      |
| Clayton Sims     | 100/24 | Jordahni Rimpel | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| David Carson     | 37/13  | Alex Joseph     | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| David Carson     | 49/11  | Patrick Rimpel  | Austin Twaddle      |
| Linh Lam         | 19/1   | Patrick Rimpel  | Austin Twaddle      |
| Linh Lam         | 65/11  | Alex Joseph     | Sajana Adhikari     |
| Cody Martin      | 65/12  | Alex Joseph     | Sajana Adhikari     |
| Cody Martin      | 148/4  | Aliyah Moss     | Austin Twaddle      |
| Lisa Pizzo       | 35/7   | Jordahni Rimpel | Austin Twaddle      |
| Lisa Pizzo       | 43/27  | Jordahni Rimpel | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Efrain Estrada*  | 64/8   | Alex Joseph     | Sajana Adhikari     |
| Efrain Estrada   | 81/19  | Patrick Rimpel  | Austin Twaddle      |
| Lacey Hoy        | 61/11  | Aliyah Moss     | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Lacey Hoy*       | 179/30 | Diana Watt      | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Cody Purdy       | 14/27  | Patrick Rimpel  | Austin Twaddle      |
| Cody Purdy       | 142/16 | Patrick Rimpel  | Austin Twaddle      |
| Kristen Stroope  | 6/24   | Alex Joseph     | Abolghasem Esmaeili |
| Kristen Stroope* | 65/18  | Alex Joseph     | Sajana Adhikari     |
| Cody Schwab      | 15/10  | Patrick Rimpel  | Austin Twaddle      |
| Cody Schwab      | 173/9  | Annie Durham    | Joshua Mestas       |
| Peter Weir       | 8/6    | Alex Joseph     | Abolghasem Esmaeili |

I identified the notaries listed above as Abolghasem Esmaeili, [REDACTED], owner of the UPS Store at 14405 W. Colfax Ave., Lakewood, County of Jefferson, State of Colorado; Sajana Adhikari, [REDACTED], owner of the UPS Store at 12081 W. Alameda Pkwy., Lakewood, County of Jefferson, State of Colorado; and Austin Twaddle, [REDACTED], manager of the UPS Store at 12081 W. Alameda Pkwy., Lakewood, County of Jefferson, State of Colorado. I inspected the notary logs for Esmaeili on 8/3/2022, and Adhikari and Twaddle’s notary logs on 8/4/2022. I did not identify Mestas or inspect his notary log because Durham was one of Andersen’s Colorado-based volunteer circulators and Schwab did not respond to my inquiries. During those inspections, I found notary entries for the circulators noted above, in which the notaries identified the circulators by name, address, and driver’s license. I used this information to identify Diana Watt as:

Diana Watt. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Beginning 9/15/2022, I contacted the voters listed on pages three and four of this affidavit. I provided all of those voters with images from the Andersen petition with their name and signatures and asked if the signatures and handwriting were theirs. Schwab and Estrada did not respond to my inquiry. All of the others told me that neither the handwriting, nor the signatures in their names on the Andersen petitions were theirs. I also learned that Brinkman, Maruf, and Sims had moved out of Colorado prior to 2022 and were not in Colorado on the dates their signatures appeared on the Andersen petition.

On 11/2/2022, I had a recorded phone interview with Watt, who verbally identified herself. Watt confirmed she used to work at Grassfire and ran Grassfire’s 2022

Colorado projects, which were for the Carl Andersen, Lisa Frizell, and Darren Weekly petition campaigns for political office. Watt was a contractor for Grassfire and had worked in politics for many years prior to joining the company. She was hired by Grassfire in August, 2021 as the Deputy State Director to work on Grassfire's project to gather petitions for a casino initiative in Florida. After that campaign, Watt and some of Grassfire's circulators came to Colorado to work on the Andersen, Frizell, and Weekly petition campaigns. Watt said Grassfire circulators cheated and committed fraud in Colorado, and Watt lost her job over it. The fraud was found after the petitions were turned in. Watt insisted Grassfire was not at fault, but the people they hired to circulate petitions for Andersen committed the fraud.

During our conversation, Watt said, "My name is on some petitions that are very bad." According to Watt, Stephanie Lucas was Grassfire's most trusted circulator in Miami. Lucas came to Colorado and collected a number of signatures for Andersen. One night, Lucas told Watt that Lucas had to go back to Miami the next day for an emergency. The signatures Lucas gathered for Andersen were not notarized. It was late and no notary was available before Lucas left Colorado. Watt claimed she called Lee Vasche, one of Grassfire's owners, to discuss the signatures Lucas gathered that were not notarized. They felt that Lucas was a trusted circulator and Lucas had insisted her petitions were good before she left. According to Watt, Vasche told Watt to put her name on the Lucas petition sections, even though Watt did not do any actual petitioning for the Andersen campaign. Watt signed her name to the Lucas petition sections in the presence of a notary and submitted them to be included with Andersen's petition so Andersen would not lose those signatures. It was not until afterwards that they realized Lucas' petition sections had fraudulent signatures. Watt believed some Grassfire petition circulators had an older voter list, which accounted for the number of names of dead voters that appeared on the Andersen campaign. Watt told me, "So there you go. Go ahead and charge me. I don't give a fuck at this point. That's what happened. I put my name on Stephanie's illegitimate petitions. That's what happened. There you go."

Watt said signing the circulator's affidavit before a notary meant a person swore that they collected petitions from legal voters in the area they were in, or swearing to collecting legal petitions from registered voters. Watt knew at the time she should not have done that. Watt knew it was wrong and that she would pay for it.

On 11/14/2022, I had a recorded interview with Sean Bartley, [REDACTED], one of the owners of Grassfire, in the presence of his attorney. Bartley appeared from his home office in Ashland, OH. Bartley had come to Colorado to assist with finalizing the Andersen petition in early 2022. According to Bartley, Watt was not assigned to gather signatures on the Andersen campaign, just the Frizell campaign. Bartley was aware that Lucas was supposed to work on the Andersen campaign, but no signatures were submitted by Lucas for Andersen. Bartley later talked to Watt about it and learned that Lucas left Colorado without having her petition sections notarized, so Watt signed the Lucas petition sections and turned them in. According to Bartley, nobody told Watt to do this. As a result, Watt was fired from Grassfire.

On 12/19/2022, I had a recorded interview with Lee Vasche, [REDACTED], another Grassfire owner, in the presence of his attorney. Vasche appeared from his home office in Kilauea Kona, HI. Vasche's role in the Andersen campaign was to make travel arrangements for Grassfire staff and circulators, complete payroll, and supervise petition validity checks. Grassfire had obtained a Colorado statewide voter file, which was used to cross reference petition signatures gathered by Grassfire's circulators. Vasche oversaw Grassfire's validation operation to make sure each petition line contained a registered voter. Grassfire did not have Colorado voter signatures to compare with the signatures on the petition. Vasche did not travel to Colorado for the Andersen operation.

About halfway through the Andersen campaign, Vasche and Watt had a conversation about Lucas. Lucas had to leave Colorado quickly, but still needed a notary. Watt and Vasche discussed options to deal with that situation, such as postponing Lucas' flight. Watt suggested that she sign the petition sections circulated by Lucas, and possibly those of another circulator who had to leave; Vasche did not recall who the other circulator was. Vasche told Watt it was a big deal to put her name on the line indicating that Watt circulated the petitions, so they had better be very good signatures. Lucas had been a very good circulator for Grassfire that Watt trusted and was friendly with. Vasche denied telling Watt to sign the Lucas petition sections or that doing so was a viable option. Vasche and Watt did not talk about it again until after the Andersen insufficiency report came out and Watt's name appeared as an Andersen circulator. That was when Vasche realized Watt actually signed the Lucas petition sections, and it turned out there were a number of forged signatures on the petition sections Watt signed.

It appears there is probable cause to believe that on 3/6/2022, at 14405 W. Colfax Ave., Lakewood, County of Jefferson, State of Colorado, Diana Watt completed the Affidavit of Circulator for Carl Andersen for Congress petition sections 177-183 that she did not circulate (bullet point three of Affidavit of Circulator), and that contained signatures not affixed in her presence (bullet points four and eight of Affidavit of Circulator). In spite of the admonishment in bullet point eight of the Affidavit of Circulator for the truthful completion of the affidavit, Watt completed these affidavits in the presence of Abolghasem Esmaeili, a valid Notary Public in the State of Colorado, who notarized Watt's signatures on these affidavits. These notarized petition sections were then submitted to the Colorado Secretary of State on 3/11/2022 at 1700 Broadway, Suite 550, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado in an attempt to influence the Colorado Secretary of State to approve Carl Andersen to appear on the 2022 Colorado Republican primary ballot for Colorado's U.S. House of Representatives 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District seat.

Based upon the above information, your affiant requests the court issue an arrest warrant for Diana Ellen Watt, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] for violation of Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.): C.R.S. §18-8-306, Attempt to Influence a Public Official; and C.R.S. §1-13-104 and §C.R.S. 18-8-503(1), Perjury.

Affiant \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator Chris Byrne

ERICA MANCHA  
NOTARY PUBLIC  
STATE OF COLORADO  
NOTARY ID 20144035639  
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES SEPTEMBER 25, 2026

Subscribed and sworn before me this 2nd day of February, 2023

9/25/2026  
Commission Expires

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

\_\_\_\_\_  
Judge

