

CAMPAIGN FINANCE COMPLAINT

Arizona Secretary of State, Campaign Finance Division

May 14, 2026

Via Email (campaignfinance@azsos.gov)

Campaign Finance Division

Arizona Secretary of State

1700 W Washington St, Floor 7

Phoenix, AZ 85007

Complainant:

[REDACTED]

[CITY REDACTED]

[EMAIL REDACTED]

[PHONE REDACTED]

Identity Verification (per A.R.S. § 16-938(A)): I am an identifiable human being. I am a qualified Arizona voter registered in Maricopa County. I am submitting this complaint as an individual, not on behalf of any entity.

Respondent:

Fortify AZ

AZ Secretary of State Committee #: 102154

Jurisdiction: Arizona Secretary of State

Treasurer: Ashley Ragan

Address: 2211 E Highland Ave, Ste 210, Phoenix, AZ 85016

Phone: (602) 451-4292

Email: ashley@incomplianceaz.com

I. Summary

This complaint concerns three expenditures totaling **\$1,257,000.00** that Fortify AZ disclosed on **Schedule E1 (Operating Expenses)** of its 2026 Quarter 1 report (Report ID 371224, filed April 15, 2026, covering January 1 – March 31, 2026).

Every dollar of the \$1,257,000.00 was paid to vendors engaged in the paid circulation of, or paid media in support of, a statewide initiative petition that Fortify AZ itself is sponsoring for the 2026 General Election ballot. On the face of the filing — three payments to a paid signature-gathering firm and a media firm, no other operational activity, no other vendors, no other expenditures — every payment is a **ballot measure expenditure** within the meaning of A.R.S. § 16-901(4) and triggers itemization on **Schedule E2 (Independent & Ballot Measure Expenditures)** with the disclosures required by A.R.S. §§ 16-926(B)(3)(m) and 16-926(H).

Schedule E2 of Report ID 371224 shows **\$0.00**, this period and cycle-to-date. The schedule miscategorization renders the report incomplete: it omits every ballot-measure-specific disclosure the statute requires — identification of the ballot measure, the ballot measure serial number (or, in its absence, an identifying description), the election date, the mode of advertising, and the date of first publication or distribution.

The accuracy and completeness of a report filed with the Secretary of State by a committee registered with the Secretary of State is squarely within the Department's mandate as filing officer under A.R.S. § 16-938(A).

II. The Three Transactions at Issue

Based on direct review of [Report ID 371224](#), Schedule E1, page 4, Fortify AZ disclosed the following three payments, each categorized as "Professional Services - Consultants" under Schedule E1 (Operating Expenses):

Date	Vendor	Amount	Schedule (as filed)	Category (as filed)
03/17/2026	AZ PETITION PARTNERS	\$200,000.00	E1	Professional Services - Consultants
03/24/2026	AZ PETITION PARTNERS	\$1,050,000.00	E1	Professional Services - Consultants
03/25/2026	Marson Media	\$7,000.00	E1	Professional Services - Consultants
TOTAL		\$1,257,000.00		

Schedule E2 of Report ID 371224, this period: **\$0.00**.

Schedule E2 of Report ID 371224, cycle-to-date: **\$0.00**.

The Q1 report is the committee's only report on file with the Secretary of State, and Schedule E1 contains no other entries. The \$1,257,000.00 is the committee's entire 2026-cycle expenditure activity to date.

The report is signed under penalty of perjury by Treasurer Ashley Ragan as required by A.R.S. § 16-926(B)(5).

III. Fortify AZ Is the Sponsor of a Statewide Ballot Initiative; the Spending Is for Petition Circulation

This complaint can be resolved on the face of the committee's own filing, supplemented by minimal background facts that the Department can verify against its own records.

A. The committee. Fortify AZ (Committee #: 102154) is registered with the Arizona Secretary of State as a political committee. Its registered office is **2211 E Highland Ave, Ste 210, Phoenix, AZ 85016**, an address publicly identified with the compliance firm InCompliance LLC. The committee's treasurer email is `ashley@incomplianceaz.com`. The committee's only contributions in the 2026 cycle, as reported on Schedule C4b of Report ID 371224, are two transfers from **American Federation for Children** (1020 19th Street, NW, #675, Washington, DC 20036) totaling **\$1,300,000.00** — a \$250,000.00 transfer on March 17, 2026 and a \$1,050,000.00 transfer on March 23, 2026.

B. The activity. The committee's only expenditures, as reported on Schedule E1 of Report ID 371224, are the three payments tabulated in Section II above. All three are categorized "Professional Services - Consultants." The vendors are:

- **AZ Petition Partners** (4125 S Mill Ave, [CITY REDACTED] 85281). AZ Petition Partners is a commercial signature-gathering firm whose paid circulation services for Arizona initiative campaigns are a matter of public record across multiple election cycles.
- **Marson Media** (801 N 1st Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85003). Marson Media is a paid-media firm.

C. The initiative. Fortify AZ is the registered applicant for a statewide ballot initiative concerning Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) program for the November 2026 General Election ballot. The initiative is widely reported in Arizona news media. Representative coverage:

- KJZZ, "Groups spend millions to shape Arizona school voucher reform" (April 20, 2026).
- Arizona Capitol Times, "Dueling ballot proposals compete to reform Arizona's ESA program" (March 20, 2026).
- AZ Family, "Arizona school voucher ballot measures spark confusion claims" (March 25, 2026).
- AZ Luminaria, "Competing ESA reform propositions seek ballot spots, sow confusion" (May 1, 2026).

Each of those publications independently reports that Fortify AZ is funded by American Federation for Children — the same single donor identified on Schedule C4b of Report ID 371224 — and that Fortify AZ's spending is directed at the paid circulation of its initiative petition.

D. The pass-through structure on the face of the filing. Report ID 371224 establishes the following pattern within a single 30-day window:

Date	Inflow (AFC → Fortify AZ)	Outflow (Fortify AZ → vendor)
03/17/2026	\$250,000 received	\$200,000 paid to AZ Petition Partners (same day)
03/23/2026	\$1,050,000 received	—
03/24/2026	—	\$1,050,000 paid to AZ Petition Partners (next business day)
03/25/2026	—	\$7,000 paid to Marson Media

The committee received \$250,000 from American Federation for Children and disbursed \$200,000 to the paid signature firm **on the same day**, then received an additional \$1,050,000 from American Federation for Children and disbursed exactly \$1,050,000 to the same signature firm **the next business day**. The remaining \$7,000 went to a paid-media firm. There are no other transactions in Schedules C1–C7, L1, R1, T1, S1, E2, E3, or E4. The committee has no employees, no rent, no compliance fees, no fundraising costs, no overhead disclosed of any kind. On its face, every dollar Fortify AZ has spent in the 2026 cycle was paid to commercial vendors whose work is the qualification and promotion of the committee's own initiative.

IV. Statutory Violations Alleged

A. The spending is "ballot measure expenditure" under A.R.S. § 16-901(4)

A.R.S. § 16-901(4) defines "ballot measure expenditure" as:

"[A]n expenditure made by a person that expressly advocates the support or opposition of a clearly identified ballot measure."

A.R.S. § 16-901(25) defines "expenditure" as "any purchase, payment or other thing of value that is made by a person for the purpose of influencing an election." A.R.S. § 16-901(17) defines "election" to expressly include "any election for any ballot measure in this state."

A.R.S. § 16-901(39) defines "person" to include a "committee." Fortify AZ is a registered political committee, and a "person" for purposes of Chapter 6.

The three transactions tabulated in Section II are payments to commercial vendors whose engagement is for the paid mass-circulation of a statewide ballot-measure petition that Fortify AZ itself is sponsoring (AZ Petition Partners: \$1,250,000) and paid media in support of that effort (Marson Media: \$7,000). The "clearly identified ballot measure" is the Fortify AZ-sponsored ESA initiative whose text the committee has filed with the Secretary of State and whose paid circulation the committee is paying for.

The "express advocacy" element is satisfied on the face of the activity itself. Paid petition circulation is the textbook case of express advocacy of a ballot measure: a paid commercial circulator approaches a member of the public, presents the initiative text, and asks the voter — in so many words — to sign in support of the measure's qualification for the ballot. The verb "support" is the request itself. Under any reasonable construction of A.R.S. § 16-901(4)'s "expressly advocates the support ... of a clearly identified ballot measure" requirement, paying a commercial signature firm \$1,250,000 to circulate one's own initiative is, on its face, express advocacy of that measure's support. A contrary construction would render § 16-901(4) inoperative as to the activity it most plainly reaches — paid initiative circulation — and would permit every initiative committee in Arizona to classify the entirety of its core spending as operating expenses on Schedule E1, defeating the disclosure architecture of § 16-926(B)(3)(m) and (H).

A.R.S. § 16-901.01 supplies definitions of "expressly advocates" by reference to candidate communications. To the extent the (A)(2) "general public communication ... that in context can have no reasonable meaning other than to advocate the election or defeat of [a candidate]" framework is read by analogy to ballot measures (as the parallel statutory architecture of § 16-901(4) and § 16-926(B)(3)(m) suggests), the targeted in-person solicitation of voter support for an identified initiative, paid for during the qualification phase of a statewide ballot-measure campaign, can have no reasonable meaning in context other than to advocate the measure's qualification and approval. But the analogical reading is not required; the plain text of § 16-901(4) standing alone reaches the activity.

B. § 16-926(B)(3)(m) requires Schedule E2 itemization with measure-specific disclosures

A.R.S. § 16-926(B)(3) requires an itemized list of disbursements broken out by category, including separately identified categories for:

"(a) Disbursements for operating expenses...

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(m) Expenditures to advocate the passage or defeat of a ballot measure, including identification of the ballot measure, ballot measure serial number, election date, mode of advertising and distribution or publication date."

The Q1 report places all \$1,257,000.00 in (a) "Disbursements for operating expenses." None of the (m) disclosures appear anywhere in the report. The ballot measure is not identified. No serial number is given. No election date is given. No mode of advertising beyond the generic Schedule E1 sub-category "Professional Services - Consultants." No date of first publication or distribution.

C. § 16-926(H) requires an expenditure report for ballot measure expenditures in excess of \$1,000

A.R.S. § 16-926(H) provides:

"An entity that makes independent expenditures or ballot measure expenditures in excess of \$1,000 during a reporting period shall file an expenditure report with the filing officer for the applicable reporting period. Expenditure reports shall identify the candidate or ballot measure supported or opposed, office sought by the candidate, if any, election date, mode of advertising and first date of publication, display, delivery or broadcast of the advertisement."

Each of the three transactions individually exceeds the \$1,000 threshold by more than two orders of magnitude. The aggregate exceeds the threshold by more than three orders of magnitude. The Q1 report contains no expenditure report on Schedule E2 or any other schedule that supplies the (H) disclosures.

A.R.S. § 16-901(22) defines "entity" as "a corporation, limited liability company, labor organization, partnership, trust, association, organization, joint venture, cooperative, unincorporated organization or association or other organized group that consists of more than one individual." Fortify AZ is a registered political committee with a designated treasurer (Ashley Ragan) and is, by definition, an "organized group that consists of more than one individual." It is therefore an "entity" within the meaning of § 16-926(H). Even were that not so, the (B)(3)(m) violation under § IV.B above is independent of § 16-926(H) and stands on its own: § 16-926(B)(3)(m) applies to every "committee" that files a campaign finance report under § 16-926(A).

D. Schedule selection on a perjury-signed report

Schedule selection on a campaign finance report is a representation by the treasurer about the nature of the underlying expenditure. The treasurer's certification under A.R.S. § 16-926(B)(5) is issued under penalty of perjury.

The text of § 16-901(4) ("ballot measure expenditure"), § 16-926(B)(3)(m), and § 16-926(H) does not contain any carve-out that exempts the proponent committee of a ballot measure from disclosing its own ballot-measure spending on Schedule E2. The plain reading reaches every "entity that makes ... ballot measure expenditures in excess of \$1,000," with no qualification for the entity's relationship to the measure. Whether Fortify AZ's Schedule E1 placement reflects a contrary legal view, an oversight, or a deliberate election to avoid the (B)(3)(m) and (H) disclosure requirements is a question of fact for the Department's reasonable-cause investigation under A.R.S. § 16-938(C). The complaint does not need to resolve that question; the omission of every (B)(3)(m) and (H) disclosure from a report covering \$1,257,000.00 of ballot-measure-purposed spending is sufficient to establish reasonable cause to investigate.

V. Jurisdiction

A.R.S. § 16-938(A) provides that, on receipt of a third-party complaint, the filing officer "is the sole public officer who is authorized to initiate an investigation into alleged violations of this article and articles 1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6 of this chapter." A.R.S. § 16-901(27) defines "filing officer" as "the secretary of state or the county, city or town officer in charge of elections for that jurisdiction who accepts statements and reports for those elections pursuant to section 16-928." A.R.S. §§ 16-901, 16-901.01, and 16-926 — the statutes implicated by this complaint — are codified within Article 1 of Chapter 6, and are squarely within the SOS's investigative authority under § 16-938(A) when applied to a committee registered with the Secretary of State.

Fortify AZ is registered with and files its periodic campaign finance reports with the Arizona Secretary of State. Page 1 of Report ID 371224 expressly states: "Jurisdiction: Arizona Secretary of State." The Department accepted the report on April 15, 2026.

The complaint does not ask the Secretary of State to adjudicate any matter outside its jurisdiction. It asks the Secretary of State to investigate the accuracy and completeness of a report that Fortify AZ itself

filed with the Secretary of State, on the schedule the committee itself selected. That is the core function of the filing officer under § 16-938(A).

VI. Requested Action

I respectfully request that the Campaign Finance Division of the Secretary of State's Office:

- 1. Accept this complaint** under A.R.S. § 16-938 and assign a docket number.

- 2. Initiate an investigation** under A.R.S. § 16-938(A) into the categorization of the three vendor payments totaling \$1,257,000.00 on Fortify AZ's 2026 Quarter 1 report (Report ID 371224), and determine whether reasonable cause exists to believe that A.R.S. §§ 16-926(B)(3)(m) and 16-926(H) have been violated.

- 3. Request voluntary production** from Fortify AZ, pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-938(D), of (a) the engagement, retainer, or service agreements between Fortify AZ and AZ Petition Partners under which the \$1,250,000.00 was paid; (b) the engagement, retainer, or service agreement between Fortify AZ and Marson Media under which the \$7,000.00 was paid; and (c) the treasurer's working ledger entries supporting the Schedule E1 categorization of the three line items.

- 4. Determine** whether Report ID 371224 requires amendment to (a) move the three vendor payments from Schedule E1 to Schedule E2, and (b) include the ballot-measure-identification, serial number, election-date, mode-of-advertising, and first-publication-date disclosures required by A.R.S. §§ 16-926(B)(3)(m) and 16-926(H).

- 5. If reasonable cause is found**, refer the matter to the Attorney General under A.R.S. § 16-938(C)(1), with the civil penalty under A.R.S. § 16-938(E)(2) computed against the full \$1,257,000.00 and, on a finding of special circumstances under § 16-938(E)(2), authorize a penalty of up to three times the presumptive amount given the volume of activity, the absence of any Schedule E2 entry on the only report the committee has filed, and the time-sensitivity of disclosure in the qualification phase of a statewide ballot initiative.

6. Provide written confirmation of receipt of this complaint, the assigned docket number, and the procedural timeline within ten (10) business days of receipt.

The underlying record is Report ID 371224, on file with the Department. The complaint can be resolved on the face of that filing; voluntary production of the underlying engagement materials under A.R.S. § 16-938(D) is requested above to permit the Department to corroborate the purpose of the spending.

Respectfully submitted,

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