



# NEWS RELEASE

**Office of Representative Michelle Ugenti-Rita**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **REPRESENTATIVE UGENTI-RITA INTRODUCES BILL TO PROHIBIT THE COLLECTION OF BALLOTS**

**STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX (Wednesday, December 30, 2015)** Representative Michelle Ugenti-Rita (R-23) has introduced HB2023 which prescribes a class 6 felony for collecting a voted or unvoted early ballot from another person. However, a family, household member or caregiver of a voter, as well as election officials and United States postal workers will continue to be allowed to collect ballots.

Arizona is widely recognized as being at the forefront of efforts to increase voter turnout and participation. Unfortunately, some of those efforts have been abused to negatively impact the results of elections. This legislation is an effort to maintain the ability of Arizonan's to participate in the electoral process via the mail without it being manipulated.

Rep. Ugenti-Rita said, "During my tenure at the legislature I have been a strong advocate of a fair and impartial electoral process. I believe ballot harvesting flies in the face of that. Prohibiting the collection of ballots is important to maintaining the integrity of the electoral process. Voting is the most direct method to impact government and the process should be void of fraud to ensure voters can have confidence in the system."

Secretary of State Michele Reagan further iterated, "We must do all we can to improve election integrity and reduce the opportunity for political gamesmanship from any political party," said Secretary Reagan. "I've always said we want to make it easy to vote and hard to cheat. This commonsense legislation will ensure voted ballots are secure with the USPS and not in the hands of activist groups walking door-to-door in neighborhoods collecting hundreds of ballots without any oversight."

Phoenix City Councilman Sal DiCiccio stated, "This bill is about protecting voter rights. The bill protects our precious rights at the ballot box by preventing extreme influence, coercion and ballot fraud from people collecting ballots for special interest groups."

Rep. Ugenti-Rita continued, "Due to the nature of this issue, it will be the only bill I hear during the first meeting of the Elections Committee. HB2023 is the product of a deliberative stakeholder process that involved participants from multiple levels of government eager to develop a solution to this problem and I thank them for their contributions and support."

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