

# [***Arizona Republican drops reelection effort after accusation he forged signatures***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BV1-T4T1-JC5B-G46R-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** JONATHAN J. COOPER, Associated Press

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**Body**

PHOENIX — A leader of the conservative group Turning Point Action resigned from the organization Thursday and dropped his bid for reelection to the Arizona House of Representatives after he was accused of forging signatures on his nominating petitions.

Republican state Rep. Austin Smith has in the past promoted disproven allegations of election fraud.

A complaint filed by a Democratic activist in Smith’s district says several petition sheets contain signatures “that appear to have been written by the same person" and says “many of those signatures bear a striking resemblance to Smith's.” It includes affidavits from two voters whose names were included in Smith's petition but say they never signed.

Smith cast the allegations as a coordinated attack by Democrats that was “silly on its face," but said he would drop out to avoid racking up legal bills.

“I might be confident in victory, but all it would take is a judge believing any one person, and all would be lost,” Smith said in a statement he posted to social media.

Smith was a senior director of Turning Point Action, the campaign arm of the youth organizing group Turning Point USA, which has become a major force in Arizona Republican ***politics*** and is working to expand its influence nationally. A spokesperson for the group confirmed Thursday that Smith had resigned.

Smith is a first-term lawmaker in a safe Republican legislative district in the Phoenix suburbs, but his departure from the race leaves the GOP with just one candidate for two House seats as the party looks to hold onto its slim legislative majority. Smith urged voters to write in the name of another Republican from the district.

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