

PRESS RELEASE

I, Paula Beard, Union County Tax Collector, am compelled to respond to the article and subsequent feedback pertaining to said article dated November 4, 2017 in the El Dorado News-Times, titled "Quorum Court looks to enforce background checks". Having worked for Union County for over 24 years, it is a great honor to be elected as a constitutional officer for Union County. I took an oath to uphold the duties of the Office of the Tax Collector and abide by the Arkansas State Constitution, as have all my employees. We are here to serve the taxpayers of Union County.

Tension in the Union County Courthouse began to materialize when we determined the previous software/hardware that was being utilized, was no longer competent, and limited the productivity and effectiveness of my office. Despite opposition, we were able to implement new software and hardware, after weeks of examining our options, and to date, we are very happy with our new vendor, and have had positive feedback from the taxpayers.

As for the background checks, we completely support the need for background checks, and believe that this should have been implemented a long time ago. Let me be clear - all employees in my office have complied and submitted background checks to me, as I am the constitutional officer. Upon the passing of Ordinance 1457, I was immediately informed that the Ordinance was allegedly targeting one of my employees. We were informed that the ultimate goal of the official seeking executive privileges over my office, was to remove said employee by any means necessary. I will not allow paltry personal agendas to determine how I run my office, nor should any other elected official. Any indiscretions involving any of my employees have been addressed and entirely resolved.

Naturally, one of my employees was hesitant to leave his career and future in the hands of a County Official, that had allegedly expressed extreme bias and a willingness to terminate him regardless of what was found on the background check, as the Ordinance gave him total authority to make these executive decisions.

Upon obtaining legal counsel, regarding Ordinance 1457 and the subsequent resolution, it was unequivocally declared by our legal counsel that the County Judge does not have the authority to make executive decisions for my office or any other elected official. When personal agendas are allegedly disguised as something beneficial to the County, with the true intent being of a much more sinister and unconstitutional nature, we will stand up for what is right, ethical, and what is constitutional. None of the counties with whom we have contacted implement anything similar to this Ordinance - regarding their county judge having the authority to review background checks for other County Officials, and then at his/her discretion taking executive action.

My office is audited by the State Legislative Auditors every year, and the implication of incompetence and malfeasance is unjustified and misrepresentative of how I have conducted operations in my office. I am proud of all of my employees and stand by each and every one of them. We have served the people, in a professional, efficient, and legal manner and will continue to do so.

I would like to extend a personal invitation to anyone that would like to come see me and my staff, and view our operations.