



February 10, 2020

**VIA U.S. MAIL, RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**

Custodian of Records  
Office of the Governor  
700 Capital Avenue, Suite 100  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

**Re: Open Records Act Request**

Dear Custodian of Records:

Pursuant to the Kentucky Open Records Act (KORA), KRS § 61.870 et seq., American Oversight makes the following request for records.

**Requested Records**

American Oversight requests that the Office of the Governor produce copies of the following records:

All communications (including emails, email attachments, calendar invitations, text messages, and phone logs) between (a) the former employees of the state of Kentucky listed in Column A and (b) the current or former employees of the federal Department of Transportation listed in Column B.

<b>Column A: Kentucky Officials or Employees</b>	<b>Column B: Federal Department of Transportation Officials or Employees</b>
i. Former Governor, Matt Bevin	i. Secretary of Transportation, Elaine Chao
ii. Former Chief of Staff, Blake Brickman	ii. Former Chief of Staff, Geoffrey Burr (geoff.burr@dot.gov)
iii. Former External Events Manager, Kathryn Snavelly	iii. Chief of Staff Todd Inman (todd.inman@dot.gov)
iv. Former Communications Director, Jessica Ditto	iv. Undersecretary of Transportation/Senior Advisor to the Secretary, Derek Kan (derek.kan@dot.gov)
v. Former Communications Director, Elizabeth Kuhn	
vi. Former General Counsel, Matt Kuhn	



vii. Former Press Secretary, Nicole Burton	v. Former Senior, Advisor Tamara Somerville (tamara.somerville@dot.gov)
viii. Former Executive Assistant, Ellie Paine	vi. Special Assistant to the Undersecretary, Monica Kuo (monica.kuo@dot.gov)
ix. Anyone communicating on behalf the above-listed individuals	vii. Federal Highway Administration Administrator, Nicole Nason (nicole.nason@dot.gov)
	viii. Former Deputy Secretary, Jeffrey Rosen (jeffrey.rosen@dot.gov)
	ix. Assistant to the Secretary and Director of Public Affairs, Andy Post (andy.post@dot.gov)
	x. Former Deputy Director of Public Affairs, Allison Moore (allison.moore@dot.gov)
	xi. Anyone communicating on behalf the above-listed individuals

Please provide all responsive records from January 20, 2017, through the date the search is conducted.

**Pursuant to KRS § 61.880(1), American Oversight requests that you notify us within three workdays as to whether you will comply with this request.**

**Statement of Noncommercial Purpose**

This request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes. American Oversight seeks the records requested to inform the public whether and to what extent Kentucky’s policymaking is being influenced by other political actors. Records with the potential to shed light on this matter would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the government, including whether Secretary Chao’s personal interests in Kentucky played any role in allocating federal funds to state authorities.<sup>1</sup> Release of the requested records may help the public to better understand the operations and activities of former Governor Bevin and his staff, including the degree to which they sought to garner favor with the federal administration.

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<sup>1</sup> Tanya Snyder et al., *Elaine Chao Favored Kentuckians in Meeting With Officials Seeking Grants*, POLITICO (Oct. 7, 2019, 5:00 AM EST), <https://www.politico.com/news/2019/10/07/elaine-chao-kentucky-officials-grants-028412>.

Furthermore, as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, American Oversight does not have a commercial purpose and the release of the information requested is not in American Oversight's financial interest. American Oversight's mission is to promote transparency in government, to educate the public about government activities, and to ensure the accountability of government officials. American Oversight uses the information gathered, and its analysis of it, to educate the public through reports, press releases, or other media. American Oversight also makes materials it gathers available on its public website and promotes their availability on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.<sup>2</sup>

American Oversight has also demonstrated its commitment to the public disclosure of documents and creation of editorial content through numerous substantive analyses posted to its website.<sup>3</sup> Examples reflecting this commitment to the public disclosure of documents and the creation of editorial content include the posting of records related to an ethics waiver received by a senior Department of Justice attorney and an analysis of what those records demonstrated regarding the Department's process for issuing such waivers;<sup>4</sup> posting records received as part of American Oversight's "Audit the Wall" project to gather and analyze information related to the administration's proposed construction of a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border, and analyses of what those records reveal;<sup>5</sup> posting records regarding potential self-dealing at the Department of Housing & Urban Development and related analysis;<sup>6</sup> posting records and analysis relating to the federal government's efforts to sell nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia;<sup>7</sup> and posting records and analysis regarding the Department of Justice's decision in response to demands from

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<sup>2</sup> American Oversight currently has approximately 15,400 followers on Facebook and 101,400 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, FACEBOOK, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Feb. 3, 2020); American Oversight (@weareoversight), TWITTER, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Feb. 3, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> News, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>.

<sup>4</sup> DOJ Records Relating to Solicitor General Noel Francisco's Recusal, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/document/doj-civil-division-response-noel-francisco-compliance>; *Francisco & the Travel Ban: What We Learned from the DOJ Documents*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/francisco-the-travel-ban-what-we-learned-from-the-doj-documents>.

<sup>5</sup> See generally *Audit the Wall*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/audit-the-wall>; see, e.g., *Border Wall Investigation Report: No Plans, No Funding, No Timeline, No Wall*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/border-wall-investigation-report-no-plans-no-funding-no-timeline-no-wall>.

<sup>6</sup> *Documents Reveal Ben Carson Jr.'s Attempts to Use His Influence at HUD to Help His Business*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/documents-reveal-ben-carson-jr-s-attempts-to-use-his-influence-at-hud-to-help-his-business>.

<sup>7</sup> *Investigating the Trump Administration's Efforts to Sell Nuclear Technology to Saudi Arabia*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigating-the-trump-administrations-efforts-to-sell-nuclear-technology-to-saudi-arabia>.

Congress to direct a U.S. Attorney to undertake a wide-ranging review and make recommendations regarding criminal investigations relating to the President's political opponents and allegations of misconduct by the Department of Justice itself and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, this request is for noncommercial purposes, and pursuant to KRS § 61.874(3), American Oversight asks that any fees charged in connection with processing this request for records not exceed the actual cost of reproduction.

### **Guidance Regarding the Search & Processing of Requested Records**

In connection with its request for records, American Oversight provides the following guidance regarding the scope of the records sought and the search and processing of records:

- Please search all locations and systems likely to have responsive records, regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics.
- In conducting your search, please understand the term “record” in its broadest sense, and pursuant to the definition of “public record” in KRS 61.870(2), to include “all books, papers, maps, photographs, cards, tapes, discs, diskettes, recordings, software, or other documentation regardless of physical form or characteristics, which are prepared, owned, used, in the possession of or retained by a public agency.”
- Our request for records includes any attachments to those records or other materials enclosed with those records when they were previously transmitted. To the extent that an email is responsive to our request, our request includes all prior messages sent or received in that email chain, as well as any attachments to the email.
- Please search all relevant records or systems containing records regarding agency business. Do not exclude records regarding agency business contained in files, email accounts, or devices in the personal custody of your officials, such as personal email accounts or text messages.
- In the event some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records. If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically why it is not reasonable to segregate portions of the record for release.
- Please take appropriate steps to ensure that records responsive to this request are not deleted by the agency before the completion of processing for this request. If

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<sup>8</sup> *Sessions' Letter Shows DOJ Acted on Trump's Authoritarian Demand to Investigate Clinton*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/sessions-letter>.

records potentially responsive to this request are likely to be located on systems where they are subject to potential deletion, including on a scheduled basis, please take steps to prevent that deletion, including, as appropriate, by instituting a litigation hold on those records.

### Conclusion

If you have any questions regarding how to construe this request for records or believe that further discussions regarding search and processing would facilitate a more efficient production of records of interest to American Oversight, please do not hesitate to contact American Oversight to discuss this request. American Oversight welcomes an opportunity to discuss its request with you before you undertake your search or incur duplication costs. By working together at the outset, American Oversight and your agency can decrease the likelihood of costly and time-consuming litigation in the future.

Where the requested records are maintained in electronic format, please provide responsive material in an electronic format by email. Alternatively, please provide responsive material in native format or in PDF format on a USB drive. Please send any responsive material being sent by mail to American Oversight, 1030 15th Street NW, Suite B255, Washington, DC 20005. If it will accelerate release of responsive records to American Oversight, please also provide responsive material on a rolling basis.

We share a common mission to promote transparency in government. American Oversight looks forward to working with your agency on this request. If you do not understand any part of this request, please contact Khahilia Shaw at foia@americanoversight.org or (202) 539-6507. Also, if American Oversight's request for a fee waiver is not granted in full, please contact us immediately upon making such a determination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Austin R. Evers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Austin R. Evers  
Executive Director  
American Oversight