



January 13, 2021

**VIA EMAIL**

Grant Tanenbaum  
Executive Office of the Mayor  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20004  
[com.foia@dc.gov](mailto:com.foia@dc.gov)

**Re: D.C. Freedom of Information Act Request**

Dear Mr. Tanenbaum:

Pursuant to the District of Columbia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), D.C. Code §§ 2-531 et seq., and implementing regulations at 1 DCMR §§ 400 et seq., American Oversight makes the following request for records.

On January 6, 2021, President Trump incited a mob to attack Congress while they were certifying the election for President-Elect Joe Biden.<sup>1</sup> The apparent insurrectionists attacked the Capitol, forced their way past reportedly understaffed Capitol Police, and ultimately delayed the Congressional session as the mob forced lawmakers and their staffs to flee.<sup>2</sup> During this assault, four people died.<sup>3</sup>

While militia members roamed Congressional halls, Trump reportedly resisted deploying the DC National Guard,<sup>4</sup> and the Defense Department reportedly initially denied a request, before later reversing the decision.<sup>5</sup> Congress was only able to certify

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<sup>1</sup> Press Release, *Romney Condemns Insurrection at U.S. Capitol*, Office of Sen. Mitt Romney, Jan. 6, 2021, <https://www.romney.senate.gov/romney-condemns-insurrection-us-capitol>.

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca Tan, et al., *Trump Supporters Storm U.S. Capitol, With One Woman Killed and Tear Gas Fired*, Wash. Post (Jan. 7, 2021, 12:30 AM), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trump-supporters-storm-capitol-dc/2021/01/06/58afc0b8-504b-11eb-83e3-322644d82356\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/trump-supporters-storm-capitol-dc/2021/01/06/58afc0b8-504b-11eb-83e3-322644d82356_story.html).

<sup>3</sup> Eric Levenson, *What We Know About the 4 Deaths in the Pro-Trump Mob that Stormed the Capitol*, CNN (Jan. 7, 2021, 2:47 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/07/us/capitol-mob-deaths/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Maggie Haberman (@maggieNYT), Twitter (Jan. 6, 2021, 8:18 PM), <https://twitter.com/maggieNYT/status/1346989618239926273> (“NEW: Trump initially rebuffed and resisted requests to mobilize the National Guard, according to a person with knowledge of the vents. It required intervention from White House officials to get it done, according to the person with knowledge of the events.”).

<sup>5</sup> Aaron C. Davis (@byaarondavis), Twitter (Jan. 6, 2021, 2:55 PM), <https://twitter.com/byaarondavis/status/1346908166030766080> (“BREAKING: A



the win for Joe Biden later in the evening after Capitol Police, the Federal Bureau for Investigation (FBI), the National Guard, Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), and others reclaimed the Capitol.

American Oversight seeks records with the potential to shed light on preparations made by the Washington, D.C., city government in advance of President Trump's January 6 rally, and its response to the ensuing violence incited by the president.

### **Requested Records**

American Oversight requests that your office produce the following records within fifteen business days:

All email communications (including email messages, complete email chains, email attachments, calendar invitations, and calendar invitation attachments) sent by Mayor Muriel Bowser or anyone communicating on her behalf, such as a scheduler or assistant, regarding President Trump's January 6 rally, including but not limited to planning, preparation, requests to other agencies for support or guidance, and response to the eruption of mob violence.

In an effort to accommodate your office and reduce the number of potentially responsive records to be processed and produced, American Oversight has limited its request to emails sent by specified officials. To be clear, however, American Oversight still requests that complete email chains be produced, displaying both sent and received messages. This means, for example, that both a specified official's response to an email and the initial received message are responsive to this request and should be produced

Please provide all responsive records from December 31, 2020, through January 7, 2021.

### **Fee Waiver Request**

In accordance with D.C. Code § 2-532(b), American Oversight requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. A waiver of fees for this request "is in the public interest because furnishing the information can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public."<sup>6</sup>

The general public has a significant interest in how the D.C. government worked with the federal government when responding to the mob violence and forced entry of the Capitol complex.<sup>7</sup> Records with the potential to shed light on this matter would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the D.C. government,

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source tells me The Defense Department has just denied a request by DC officials to deploy the National Guard to the US Capitol.).

<sup>6</sup> D.C. Code § 2-532(b); *see also* DCMR § 408.10.

<sup>7</sup> *See supra*, notes 1-5.

including whether or to what extent requests for federal assistance in containing violence incited by the president were delayed or denied.

American Oversight is committed to transparency and makes the responses agencies provide to FOIA requests publicly available, and the general public's understanding of the government's activities would be enhanced through American Oversight's analysis and publication of these records. 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>8</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>9</sup> Examples reflecting this commitment to the public disclosure of documents and the creation of editorial content include the posting of records related to the organization's State Accountability Project covering voting rights issues in various states;<sup>10</sup> 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>11</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>12</sup> posting records regarding potential self-dealing at the Department of Housing & Urban Development

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<sup>8</sup> American Oversight currently has approximately 15,600 page likes on Facebook and 105,900 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Jan. 7, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Jan. 7, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> *News*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>.

<sup>10</sup> *State Accountability Project*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/state-accountability-project>.

<sup>11</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>12</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>.

and related analysis;<sup>13</sup> posting records and analysis relating to the federal government's efforts to sell nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia;<sup>14</sup> and posting records and analysis regarding the Department of Justice's decision in response to demands from 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>15</sup>

Finally, this request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes. 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.

Accordingly, furnishing the information sought through this request can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public, and American Oversight thus qualifies for a fee waiver.

### **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:

- 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.

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<sup>13</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>14</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>.

<sup>15</sup> *Sessions' Letter Shows DOJ Acted on Trump's Authoritarian Demand to Investigate Clinton*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/sessions-letter>.

- 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 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 search or 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 possible, 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 Hart Wood at [records@americanoversight.org](mailto:records@americanoversight.org) or (202) 873-1743. 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,



Austin R. Evers  
Executive Director  
American Oversight