



February 16, 2021

VIA EMAIL

Steven A. Travis
Deputy General Counsel
Office of the West Virginia Attorney General
State Capitol Complex, Bldg. 1, Room E-26
Charleston, WV 25305
Steven.A.Travis@wvago.gov

Re: West Virginia Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear Deputy General Counsel Travis:

Pursuant to the West Virginia Freedom of Information Act, W. Va. Code §§ 29B-1-1 et seq., American Oversight makes the following request for copies of records.

On December 8, 2020, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton filed a lawsuit seeking to block various electors in Pennsylvania, Georgia, Michigan, and Wisconsin from casting “unlawful and constitutionally tainted votes” in the Electoral College.¹ The lawsuit, *Texas v. Pennsylvania*, 592 U.S. ____ (2020), alleged that the targeted states violated the U.S. Constitution by altering election procedures through non-legislative processes. On December 9, 2020, seventeen states, including West Virginia, filed a joint brief in support of Texas’ position.²

American Oversight is seeking records concerning the Office of the West Virginia Attorney General’s involvement in *Texas v. Pennsylvania*.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that the Office of the Attorney General produce the following records within five business days:³

¹ Emma Platoff, *In New LawsUIT, Texas Contests Election Results in Georgia, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania*, Tex. Tribune, Dec. 8, 2020, <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/12/08/texas-ken-paxton-election-georgia/>.

² Melissa Quinn, *Texas Sues Over Election Results in Battleground States Biden Won*, CBS News (Dec. 10, 2020, 6:57 AM), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/texas-lawsuit-supreme-court-2020-election-four-states-biden-won/>.

³ W. Va. Code § 29B-1-3(d) (requiring custodian to furnish requested records “as soon as practicable but within a maximum of five days not including Saturdays, Sundays or legal holidays.”).



All records reflecting any summaries, memoranda or analyses prepared or distributed by any personnel in the Office of the West Virginia Attorney General regarding the lawsuit *Texas v. Pennsylvania*, 592 U.S. ____ (2020).

Please provide all responsive records from November 3, 2020, through December 12, 2020.

Please notify American Oversight of any anticipated fees or costs in excess of \$100 prior to incurring such costs or fees.

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, to include any written, typed, recorded, graphic, printed, or audio material of any kind.⁴ We seek records of any kind, including electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, and photographs, as well as letters, emails, facsimiles, telephone messages, voice mail messages, and transcripts, notes, or minutes of any meetings, telephone conversations, or discussions.
- 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.⁵ 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

⁴ See W. Va. Code § 29B-1-2(6) (defining “writing” to include “books, papers, maps, photographs, cards, tapes, recordings or other documentary materials regardless of physical form or characteristics.”).

⁵ See W. Va. Code § 29B-1-2(5) (defining a “public record” to include “any writing containing information prepared or received by a public body” that “relates to the conduct of the public’s business.”).

requested records.⁶ If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically whether 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 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.

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 office 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.

Conclusion

American Oversight is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with the mission 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.⁷

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

⁶ See *Farley v. Worley*, 215 W. Va. 412, 424, 599 S.E.2d 835, 847 (2004) (holding that a public body must redact or segregate exempt from non-exempt information contained within a responsive record, absent a written justification explaining that such segregation or redaction would impose an unreasonably high burden or expense).

⁷ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,700 page likes on Facebook and 105,600 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Feb. 10, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Feb. 10, 2021).

understand any part of this request, please contact Mehreen Rasheed at records@americanoversight.org or (202) 848-1320.

Sincerely,

/s/Mehreen Rasheed
Mehreen Rasheed
on behalf of
American Oversight