



March 10, 2021

VIA EMAIL

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Clerk
Van Wert County Commissioners Office
114 E. Main Street, Suite 200
Van Wert, OH 45891
rbollenbacher@vanwertcounty.org

Thad Lichtensteiger
County Commissioner
Van Wert County Commissioners Office
114 E. Main Street, Suite 200
Van Wert, OH 45891
tlichtensteiger@vanwertcounty.org

Re: Public Records Act Request

Dear Records Officer:

Pursuant to the Ohio Public Records Act (PRA), Ohio Rev. Code § 149.43, and other applicable Ohio law, American Oversight makes the following request for records.

On January 6, 2020, rioters stormed the U.S. Capitol, inciting violence that resulted in five deaths.¹ County Commissioner Thad Lichtensteiger attended the rally.²

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that the Van Wert County Commissioners Office promptly produce the following records:

- 1) All email communications (including email messages, complete email chains, email attachments, calendar invitations, and calendar attachments) sent by County Commissioner Thad Lichtensteiger containing any of the key terms below.

¹ Eric Levenson et al., *What We Know About the 5 Deaths in the Pro-Trump Mob that Stormed the Capitol*, CNN (Jan. 8, 2021, 5:29 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/07/us/capitol-mob-deaths/index.html>.

² Christopher Mathias, *Meet Your Local Republican Insurrectionist*, Huff. Post (Jan. 22, 2021, 5:45 AM), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/republican-lawmakers-at-the-capitol-riot_n_6009e17cc5b6df63a91e5cf4?guccounter=1.



Please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2021, through January 15, 2021.

Key Terms:

- i. Capitol
- ii. "Stop the steal"
- iii. "Save America"
- iv. "Rally to Revival"
- v. Storm
- vi. Trump
- vii. President
- viii. Biden
- ix. Congress
- x. DC
- xi. D.C.
- xii. Washington
- xiii. RNC
- xiv. DNC
- xv. Patriot
- xvi. Patriots
- xvii. Pelosi
- xviii. Schumer
- xix. Pence
- xx. "Our House"
- xxi. MAGA
- xxii. "great again"
- xxiii. Caravan
- xxiv. Parler
- xxv. Gab
- xxvi. QAnon

In an effort to accommodate your office and reduce the number of potentially responsive records to be processed and produced, American Oversight has limited Item 1 of its request to communications sent by County Commissioner Thad Lichtensteiger. To be clear, however, American Oversight still requests that complete email chains be produced, displaying both sent and received messages. This means, for example, both Commissioner Lichtensteiger's response to an email containing one of the listed key terms and the initial received message are responsive to this request and should be produced.

- 2) All text messages or messages on messaging applications similar in form to text messages (such as Signal, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Twitter DMs, etc.) sent or received County Commissioner Thad Lichtensteiger containing any of the key terms listed in Part 1, above.

Please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2021, through January 15, 2021.

American Oversight requests complete text threads/conversations. This means, for example, if Commissioner Lichtensteiger sent or received a text message containing any of the key terms listed above, the complete text thread/conversation for the timeframe listed above should be produced, and not just the message containing the key term.

- 3) Records reflecting any expenditures made and/or reimbursed by the county or local government in connection with Commissioner Lichtensteiger's trip on or about January 6, 2021, to Washington, D.C., including, but not limited to, records of any reimbursements submitted by or on behalf of Commissioner Lichtensteiger.

Responsive records would include, but are not limited to, hotel or other lodging invoices or receipts; government-issued charge card or travel card reports; receipts from airlines, rental car, or other transportation companies; records reflecting the cost of government transportation; receipts or other records reflecting the cost of meals or refreshments; or records reflecting per diem payments.

Please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2021 through January 15, 2021.

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

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.
- 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.¹ 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 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 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.

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.²

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

¹ Ohio Rev. Code § 149.43(B)(1).

² American Oversight currently has approximately 15,700 page likes on Facebook and 105,400 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Mar. 4, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Mar. 4, 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