



August 27, 2021

VIA EMAIL

Yolanda Dixon
Secretary of the Senate
State Capitol Building
P.O. Box 94183, Room B-231
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804
dixony@legis.la.gov

Re: Public Records Law Request

Dear Secretary Dixon:

Pursuant to the Louisiana Public Records Law, La. Rev. Stat. Ann. 44:1 et seq., American Oversight makes the following request for records.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that the Louisiana State Senate produce the following records within three business days:

1. A complete copy (including any attachments) of any contract, amendment, memorandum of understanding, or other written agreement regarding external entities providing services relevant to the state or congressional redistricting processes, including, but not limited to, agreements with providers of map drawing software, consultants, advisors, or legal counsel.

This request should be interpreted to include any copies of contractual documents pertaining to redistricting in possession of the Louisiana State Senate, the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee, or Senator Hewitt's office, including those to which the Louisiana State Senate, the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee, or Senator Hewitt are not party.

2. A complete copy of any unpublished formal or informal guidance, directives, memoranda, criteria, or other policy document pertaining to redistricting issued by or in possession of the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee or Senator Hewitt's office.
3. Any district boundary proposals produced by any member of the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee, any Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee staff member, or any entity commissioned or contracted by the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee or the Louisiana State Senate, as well as any related data analyses. Please note that this request does not seek



electoral district maps or community of interest maps submitted as public comment by members of the public.

4. Any records containing assessments, interpretations, or opinions concerning data from the 2020 Census or the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS).
5. Any records containing assessments, interpretations, or opinions concerning past election results.
6. Any records containing assessments, interpretations, or opinions concerning political party affiliation data, racial demographic data, or present incumbency.
7. Records sufficient to identify the redistricting-related roles or responsibilities of any member of the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee, any Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee staff member, or any entity commissioned or contracted by the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee or the Louisiana State Senate for redistricting-related work.
8. Records reflecting any training materials used to instruct any member of the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee, any Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee staff member, or any entity commissioned or contracted by the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee or the Louisiana State Senate for redistricting-related work, in their roles or responsibilities.
9. Any records containing any formal or informal appraisal of or comment on any content or public comment submitted to the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee by members of the public in possession of Senator Hewitt's office.

Please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2021, through the date the search is conducted.

Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with La. Rev. Stat. Ann. 44:32(C)(2), American Oversight requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. A waiver of fees for this request is appropriate, because American Oversight's use of the requested records "will be limited to a public purpose."¹

This request is made solely for a public purpose.² The public has a significant interest in Louisiana's redistricting process.³ Records with the potential to shed light on this

¹ La. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 44:32(C)(2).

² *Id.*

³ Tyler Bridges, *Next Big Issue for Legislature is Redistricting Louisiana. Meet the State Rep at the Center of It*, Advocate (June 14, 2021, 10:10 AM),

matter would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the government, including whether and to what extent external entities have been contracted to conduct redistricting-related work. American Oversight is committed to transparency and makes the responses agencies provide to public records requests publicly available, and the public's understanding of the government's activities would be enhanced through American Oversight's analysis and publication of these records.

Furthermore, this request is fundamentally made 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. 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.⁴

American Oversight has also demonstrated its commitment to the public disclosure of documents and creation of editorial content through regular substantive analyses posted to its website.⁵ Examples reflecting this commitment to the public disclosure of documents and the creation of editorial content include the posting of records and analysis related to the organization's investigations into misconduct and corruption in state governments;⁶ posting records and analysis of federal and state governments' responses to the Coronavirus pandemic;⁷ posting records received as part of American

https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/politics/legislature/article_362bb840-cb92-11eb-b84a-1bcf31c3e225.html.

⁴ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,700 page likes on Facebook and 107,500 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Aug. 17, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Aug. 17, 2021).

⁵ See generally *News*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>.

⁶ See generally *State Investigations*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/states>; see, e.g., *State Government Contacts with Voting-Restriction Activists*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/state-government-contacts-with-voting-restriction-activists>; *Georgia's Voting Machines and Election Security*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/georgias-voting-machines-and-election-security>.

⁷ See, e.g., *The Trump Administration's Response to Coronavirus*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/the-trump-administrations-response-to-coronavirus>; *Tulsa Health Officials Initially Estimated Trump Rally Would Directly Lead to 2 to 9 Deaths*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/tulsa-health-officials-initially-estimated-trump-rally-would-directly-lead-to-2-to-9-deaths>; *Wisconsin Documents Offer Window into Early Uncertainty over COVID-19*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/wisconsin-documents-offer-window-into-early->

Oversight’s “Audit the Wall” project to gather and analyze information related to the Trump administration’s proposed construction of a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border, and analyses of what those records reveal;⁸ and 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.⁹

Accordingly, American Oversight 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:

- Please search all locations and systems likely to have responsive records, regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. For instance, if the request seeks “communications,” please search all locations likely to contain communications, including relevant hard-copy files, correspondence files, appropriate locations on hard drives and shared drives, emails, text messages or other direct messaging systems (such as iMessage, WhatsApp, Signal, or Twitter direct messages), voicemail messages, instant messaging systems such as Lync or ICQ, and shared messages systems such as Slack.
- In conducting your search, please understand the terms “record,” “document,” and “information” in their broadest sense, to include any written, typed, recorded, graphic, printed, or audio material of any kind. 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.

[uncertainty-over-covid-19](https://www.americanoversight.org/in-the-documents-florida-health-department-efforts-to-suppress-release-of-coronavirus-records); *In the Documents: Florida Health Department Efforts to Suppress Release of Coronavirus Records*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/in-the-documents-florida-health-department-efforts-to-suppress-release-of-coronavirus-records>.

⁸ 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>.

⁹ *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>.

- 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. Public business communications conducted on private email accounts and devices are public records subject to the Public Records Law.¹⁰
- 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 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 Khahilia Shaw at

¹⁰ La. Atty. Gen. Op. No. 01-155.

records@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,

/s/ Khahilia Shaw

Khahilia Shaw
on behalf of
American Oversight