



October 27, 2021

VIA EMAIL

Records Custodian
County Manager Mike Gallagher
100 N. Main Avenue
Lovington, NM 88260
mgallagher@leacounty.net

Re: Public Records Act Request

Dear Custodian of Public Records:

Pursuant to the New Mexico Inspection of Public Records Act (IPRA), NMSA 1978, Chapter 14, Article 2, American Oversight makes the following request for copies of public records.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that your office produce the following records within three business days:¹

1. All email communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, calendar invitations, and calendar invitation attachments) and text messages or messages on messaging platforms (such as Slack, GChat or Google Hangouts, Lync, Skype, Twitter direct messages, Facebook messages, WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, or Parler) between (a) Sheriff Corey Helton and (b) any of the external individuals or entities listed below.

External Entities

- I. Former Acting Director of ICE Thomas Homan
- II. Former Acting Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection Mark Morgan
- III. Representative Paul Gosar
- IV. National Border Patrol Council President Brandon Judd
- V. Federation for Immigration Reform (FAIR) President Dan Stein
- VI. Anyone communicating from an email address ending in @fairus.org

Please provide all responsive records from June 11, 2021, through July 9, 2021.

¹ If the inspection is not permitted within three business days, please explain in writing when the records will be available or when you will respond to the request and make the records available no later than fifteen days after receipt of this request. NMSA § 14-2-8.



2. Records reflecting the expenses and costs incurred by your office related to Sheriff Helton's trip to FAIR's "End the Biden Border Crisis Rally" in Hereford, AZ on June 25, 2021.

To the extent your office has aggregated records sufficient to show all relevant expenses and costs, such as spreadsheets, American Oversight would accept production of such records as sufficient. To the extent your office does not have an aggregated record of these costs, American Oversight requests records reflecting those costs, such as receipts, invoices, charge card or credit card statements, and reimbursement requests.

Relevant expenses may include, but are not limited to, hotel or other lodging costs; costs for air travel, rental car, or other transportation companies; costs incurred for government transportation; the cost of meals or refreshments; and per diem payments.

Relevant expenses include costs associated with the travel of Sheriff Helton, and of any staff members, family members, or other individuals travelling with him.

Please provide all responsive records from June 11, 2021, through July 9, 2021.

3. All email communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, and calendar invitations) sent by Sheriff Helton from June 24 to June 26, 2021.

In an effort to accommodate your office and reduce the number of potentially responsive records to be processed and produced, American Oversight has limited part 3 of this request to emails sent by Sheriff Helton. 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 Sheriff Helton's response to an email during this time period and the initial received message are responsive to this request and should be produced.

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. 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.
- 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. Records of official business conducted using unofficial systems or stored outside of official files are subject to the IPRA.²
- 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.³ 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

² See Office of the New Mexico Attorney General, *Inspection of Public Records Act Compliance Guide* at 26 (8th ed. 2015) (“if email is used to conduct public business, the email is a public record even though a personal account is used”).

³ NMSA § 14-2-9(A).

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.⁴

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 Sarah Colombo at records@americanoversight.org or (202) 869-5244.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sarah Colombo
Sarah Colombo
on behalf of
American Oversight

⁴ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,700 page likes on Facebook and 108,500 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Oct. 13, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Oct. 13, 2021).