



October 29, 2021

VIA EMAIL

Meagan Wolfe, Administrator
Wisconsin Elections Commission
212 East Washington Avenue, Third Floor
P.O. Box 7984
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7984
elections@wi.gov

Re: Public Records Law Request

Dear Administrator Wolfe:

Pursuant to Wisconsin's public records law, Wis. Stat. §§ 19.31–19.39, American Oversight makes the following request for copies of records.

On August 10-12, 2021, MyPillow CEO and election conspiracy theorist Mike Lindell hosted a “cyber symposium” in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.¹ Wisconsin Representative Timothy Ramthun attended, as did Elections Commissioner Robert Spindell and former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Michael Gableman, who now is leading an investigation into the November 2020 election.² Rep. Ramthun indicated prior to the event that he had been in contact with Gableman as well as Assembly Speaker Robin Vos regarding his ideas for an expanded investigation, for which he was seeking private funding.³ While attending the event, Rep. Ramthun released a statement indicating that he had communicated with Commissioner Spindell regarding Wisconsin's elections system about allegations made during the “symposium.”⁴

¹ Patrick Marley & Molly Beck, *Official in Charge of Wisconsin's Election Review Attends Conspiracy-Fueled Symposium Hosted by MyPillow's Mike Lindell*, Milwaukee J. Sentinel (updated Aug. 12, 2021, 6:16 PM),

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2021/08/12/wisconsin-election-official-attends-mike-lindell-cyber-symposium/8108850002/>.

² *Id.*; Scott Bauer, *Wisconsin Election Probe Leader Traveled to Arizona*, Associated Press, Aug. 12, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-elections-wisconsin-arizona-d7e52b6c5f806e606ae728a98a6e2ec5>.

³ Patrick Marley, *Wisconsin Republican Invokes the QAnon Theme As He Seeks Private Funding for an Arizona-Style Election Audit*, Milwaukee J. Sentinel (updated Aug. 4, 2021, 8:29 AM), <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2021/08/03/republican-timothy-ramthun-seeking-election-review-invokes-qanon-theme-the-calm-before-the-storm/5463451001/>.

⁴ *Rep. Ramthun Gives Cyber Symposium Update*, Aug. 11, 2021, http://www.thewheelerreport.com/wheeler_docs/files/081121ramthun_01.pdf.



American Oversight seeks records with the potential to shed light on the involvement of Wisconsin officials in the “cyber symposium,” including the extent to which they communicated with entities seeking to cast doubt on the results of the November 2020 election.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that your office produce the following records “as soon as practicable and without delay”:⁵

- A. All email communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, and calendar invitations) 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) sent or received by Commissioner Spindell regarding the “cyber symposium” hosted by Mike Lindell in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, from August 10-12, including but not limited to communications with or regarding event organizers, presenters, or attendees, or communications regarding the substantive content of the “symposium.”
- B. Any handouts, agendas, summaries, or notes provided to or created by Commissioner Spindell during or related to his trip to the “cyber symposium.” Responsive records would include, but not be limited to (A) electronic or hard-copy records provided by event organizers, presenters, or attendees, or (B) formal or informal notes, descriptions, or analyses of the event created by Commissioner Spindell.

For Parts A and B of this request, please provide all responsive records from August 1, 2021, through August 23, 2021.

Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with Wis. Stat. § 19.35(3)(e), American Oversight respectfully requests that the records be produced without charge. Providing American Oversight with a waiver of fees is in the “public interest” because American Oversight will, in accordance with its organizational mission, make the records available to the public without charge. These disclosures will likely contribute to a better understanding of relevant government procedures by the general public.

American Oversight’s work is aimed solely at serving the public interest. 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. Rather, American Oversight’s mission is to serve the public by promoting transparency in government, educating the public about government activities, and ensuring 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

⁵ Wis. Stat. § 19.35(4)(a).

other media.⁶ American Oversight also makes materials it gathers available on its public website⁷ and promotes their availability on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.⁸

The public has a significant interest in the actions of Wisconsin officials with respect to election administration.⁹ Records with the potential to shed light on this matter would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the government, including to what extent Wisconsin officials communicated with entities seeking to cast doubt on the results of the November 2020 election and future elections. 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.

American Oversight asks that if its request for a fee waiver is denied in whole or in part, that you contact us prior to incurring any costs.

Guidance Regarding the Search & Processing of Requested Records

American Oversight seeks all 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. 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 includes any attachments to these records. **No category of material should be omitted from search, collection, and production.**

Please search all locations and systems likely to have responsive records regarding official business. **You may not exclude searches of files or emails in the personal custody of your officials, such as personal email accounts.** Emails conducting

⁶ See generally *News*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>; *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>; *Wisconsin Documents Offer Window into Early Uncertainty over COVID-19*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/wisconsin-documents-offer-window-into-early-uncertainty-over-covid-19>.

⁷ *Documents*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/documents>.

⁸ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,630 page likes on Facebook and 108,900 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Oct. 28, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Oct. 28, 2021).

⁹ See *supra*, notes 1-3.

government business sent or received on the personal account of the authority's officer or employee constitutes a record for purposes of Wisconsin's public records laws.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.¹¹ If it is your position that a document contains non-exempt segments, but that those non-exempt segments are so dispersed throughout the document as to make segregation impossible, please state what portion of the document is non-exempt, and how the material is dispersed throughout the document. If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically that 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 Sarah Colombo at records@americanoversight.org or (202) 869-5244. Also, if American Oversight's

¹⁰ Wisc. Dep't of J., *Wisconsin Public Records Law Compliance Guide*, Oct. 2019, at 3, <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/sites/default/files/office-open-government/Resources/PRL-GUIDE.pdf>.

¹¹ Wis. Stat. § 19.36(6).

request for a fee waiver is not granted in full, please contact us immediately upon making such a determination.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sarah Colombo

Sarah Colombo

on behalf of

American Oversight