



May 22, 2023

VIA ONLINE PORTAL

Office of the Secretary of State
State Capitol Building
Charleston, WV 25305
Via Online Portal

Re: West Virginia Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear Records Custodian:

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.

Requested Records

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

1. All electronic communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, text messages, or messages on messaging platforms, such as Slack, GChat or Google Hangouts, Lync, Skype, or WhatsApp) between (A) any official in the Office of the Secretary of State of West Virginia listed below and (B) any of the external individuals or entities listed below, including, but not limited to at the suggested email addresses or domains.

In the case of emails and texts, the search should include those sent or received from the specified officials' personal accounts and/or devices if they were used to conduct official business, as well those sent from their official email addresses or government-issued devices.

A. Secretary of State Officials:

- i. Mac Warner, Secretary of State, and anyone serving as his scheduler or assistant
- ii. John Hoover, Special Assistant
- iii. Kathy Hess, Executive Scheduler
- iv. Chuck Flannery, Deputy Secretary and Chief of Staff

¹ 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.”).



B. External Entities:

- i. Anyone communicating from an email address ending in azleg.gov
- ii. Anyone communicating from an email address ending in conservativepartnership.org or cpi.org
- iii. Arizona Senator Kelly Townsend (kellyjtowndsend@yahoo.com, kune_fish@yahoo.com, ktownsend@azleg.gov)
- iv. Arizona Senator Sonny Borrelli (sonny4lhc@hotmail.com, sonny4ld5@hotmail.com, sonnyborrelli@hotmail.com, sborrelli@azleg.gov)
- v. Bradley Rotter (brad@rotter.com)
- vi. Jerome Corsi (jeromecorsi6554@gmail.com)
- vii. Neal Schuerer (nschuerer@outlook.com), or anyone communicating from an email address ending in pathtoreform.org
- viii. Phil Cannon (ptcannonx@gmail.com)
- ix. Ron Hooper (rhooper@termlimits.com)
- x. Shawn Smith (luftsas@gmail.com, ratioinvictus@protonmail.com)

For part 1 of this request, please provide all responsive records from **November 3, 2020**, through the date the search is conducted.

2. All electronic communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, text messages, or messages on messaging platforms, such as Slack, GChat or Google Hangouts, Lync, Skype, or WhatsApp) between (A) any official in the Office of the Secretary of State of West Virginia listed in part 1 above, and (B) any of the external individuals or entities listed below, including, but not limited to at the suggested email addresses or domains.

In the case of emails and texts, the search should include those sent or received from the specified officials' personal accounts and/or devices if they were used to conduct official business, as well those sent from their official email addresses or government-issued devices.

B. External Entities:

- i. Anyone communicating from an email address ending in americaproject.com or theamericaproject.com
- ii. Cleta Mitchell (cleta@cletamitchell.com)
- iii. Christina Bobb (christina@cgbstrategies.com)
- iv. Phil Waldron (phil@onewarrior.com), or anyone communicating from an email address ending in bonfiresearch.org
- v. Doug Logan, or anyone communicating on behalf of Cyber Ninjas (cyberninjas.com)
- vi. Jenna Ellis (jenna.ellis.esq@gmail.com)
- vii. Rob Natelson (rob.natelson1@gmail.com)

For part 2 of this request, please provide all responsive records from **March 7, 2022**, through the date the search is conducted.

For both parts of this request, please note that American Oversight does not seek, and that this request specifically excludes, the initial mailing of news clips or other mass-distribution emails. However, subsequent communications forwarding such emails are responsive to this request. In other words, for example, if one of the listed officials received a mass-distribution email from a specified email address, that initial email would not be responsive to this request. However, if they forwarded that email to another individual with their own commentary, that subsequent message would be 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 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.
- 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.² 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.³ If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically whether it is not reasonable to segregate portions of the record for release.

² 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.”).

³ 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).

- 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 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 Mehreen Rasheed at records@americanoversight.org or (202) 848-1320

⁴ American Oversight currently has approximately 16,000 followers on Facebook and 112,700 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited May 22, 2023); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited May 22, 2023).

Sincerely,

/s/ Mehreen Rasheed

Mehreen Rasheed
on behalf of
American Oversight