June 20, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL & ONLINE PORTAL

Sam Kaplan  
Chief FOIA Officer  
The Privacy Office  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane SW  
STOP-0655  
Washington, DC 20528-0655  
foia@hq.dhs.gov

Sabrina Burroughs  
FOIA Officer  
U. S. Customs & Border Protection  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Room 3.3D  
Washington, DC 20229  
Online Request at FOIAonline

Catrina Pavlik-Keenan  
Freedom of Information Act Office  
U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement  
500 12th Street SW, Stop 5009  
Washington, DC 20536-5009  
ice-foia@dhs.gov

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
National Records Center, FOIA/PA Office  
P.O. Box 648010  
Lee’s Summit, MO 64064-8010  
uscis.foia@uscis.dhs.gov

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear FOIA Officers:


Requested Records

American Oversight requests that your agency produce the following within twenty business days:

1. All email communications with any of the following individuals/organizations, including messages where custodians or outside individuals/organizations were carbon copied or blind carbon copied. This request includes all prior messages (whether incoming or outgoing) reflected in any responsive emails and any attachments to any responsive emails.

   a. Federation for American Immigration Reform (including any emails sent to or received from an address ending in @fairus.org)
   b. Immigration Reform Law Institute (including any emails sent to or received from an address ending in @irli.org)
c. Center for Immigration Studies (including any emails sent to or received from an address ending in @cis.org)
d. NumbersUSA (including any emails sent to or received from an address ending in @numbersusa.com)
e. The Remembrance Project (including any emails sent to or received from an address ending in @theremembranceproject.org)
f. Heritage Foundation (including any emails sent to or received from an address ending in @heritage.org)
g. Kris Kobach (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from kkobach@gmail.com, kris@kriskobach.com, or any emails he sent from an address ending in @ks.gov)
h. Hans von Spakovsky (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from hans.vonspakovsky@heritage.org)
i. Jason Richwine (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from Jason.richwine@gmail.com)
j. Jessica Vaughan (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from jmv@cis.org)
k. Mark Krikorian (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from msk@cis.org)
l. Steven Camerota (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from sac@cis.org)
m. Dan Stein (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from dstein@fairus.org)

n. Lori Wood (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from lwood@fairus.org)
o. Bob Dane (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from bdane@fairus.org)
p. RJ Hauman (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from rjhauman@fairus.org)
q. Heather Ham-Warren (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from hham@fairus.org)
r. Robert Najmulski (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from rnajmulski@fairus.org)
s. Roy Beck
t. Rosemary Jenks

u. Dale Wilcox (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from dwilcox@irli.org)
v. Sarah Rehberg (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from srehberg@irli.org)
w. Maria Espinoza (including but not limited to emails sent to or received from maria@theremembranceproject.org)

For DHSHQ, the search may be limited to the following custodians:

i. John Kelly;

ii. Kirstjen Nielsen;

iii. Chad Wolf;
iv. Christina Bobb;
v. John Mitnick;
vi. Miles Taylor;
vii. Michael Dougherty; and
viii. Julie Kirchner (USCIS Ombudsman).

For ICE, the search may be limited to the following custodians:
i. Thomas Homan;
ii. Thomas Blank; and
iii. John Feere.

For CBP, the search may be limited to the following custodians:
i. Kevin McAleenan, Commissioner;
ii. Julie Kirchner;
iii. Ronald Vitiello, Acting Deputy Commissioner; and
iv. Carla Provost, Acting Chief, United States Border Patrol.

For USCIS, the search may be limited to the following custodians:
i. L. Francis Cissna; and
ii. Jennifer P. Higgins, Associate Director, Refugee, Asylum and International Operations.

Please provide all responsive records from January 20, 2017, through the date of the search.

In addition to the records requested above, American Oversight also requests records describing the processing of this request, including records sufficient to identify search terms used and locations and custodians searched and any tracking sheets used to track the processing of this request. If DHS uses FOIA questionnaires or certifications completed by individual custodians or components to determine whether they possess responsive materials or to describe how they conducted searches, we also request any such records prepared in connection with the processing of this request.

American Oversight seeks all responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. 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 includes any attachments to these records. No category of material should be omitted from search, collection, and production.

Please search all records regarding agency business. You may not exclude searches of files or emails in the personal custody of your officials, such as personal email accounts. Records of official business conducted using unofficial systems or stored outside of official files is subject to the
Federal Records Act and FOIA. It is not adequate to rely on policies and procedures that require officials to move such information to official systems within a certain period of time; American Oversight has a right to records contained in those files even if material has not yet been moved to official systems or if officials have, through negligence or willfulness, failed to meet their obligations.

In addition, please note that in conducting a “reasonable search” as required by law, you must employ the most up-to-date technologies and tools available, in addition to searches by individual custodians likely to have responsive information. Recent technology may have rendered DHS’s prior FOIA practices unreasonable. In light of the government-wide requirements to manage information electronically by the end of 2016, it is no longer reasonable to rely exclusively on custodian-driven searches. Furthermore, agencies that have adopted the National Archives and Records Agency (NARA) Capstone program, or similar policies, now maintain emails in a form that is reasonably likely to be more complete than individual custodians’ files. For example, a custodian may have deleted a responsive email from his or her email program, but DHS’s archiving tools would capture that email under Capstone. Accordingly, American Oversight insists that DHS use the most up-to-date technologies to search for responsive information and take steps to ensure that the most complete repositories of information are searched. American Oversight is available to work with you to craft appropriate search terms. However, custodian searches are still required; agencies may not have direct access to files stored in .PST files, outside of network drives, in paper format, or in personal email accounts.

Under the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, agencies must adopt a presumption of disclosure, withholding information “only if . . . disclosure would harm an interest protected by an exemption” or “disclosure is prohibited by law.” If it is your position that any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, American Oversight requests that you provide an index of those documents as required under Vaughn v. Rosen, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973), cert. denied, 415

---


2 See Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy, No. 14-cv-765, slip op. at 8 (D.D.C. Dec. 12, 2016) (“The Government argues that because the agency had a policy requiring [the official] to forward all of his emails from his [personal] account to his business email, the [personal] account only contains duplicate agency records at best. Therefore, the Government claims that any hypothetical deletion of the [personal account] emails would still leave a copy of those records intact in [the official’s] work email. However, policies are rarely followed to perfection by anyone. At this stage of the case, the Court cannot assume that each and every work related email in the [personal] account was duplicated in [the official’s] work email account.” (citations omitted)).


As you are aware, a *Vaughn* index must describe each document claimed as exempt with sufficient specificity “to permit a reasoned judgment as to whether the material is actually exempt under FOIA.” Moreover, the *Vaughn* index “must describe each document or portion thereof withheld, and for each withholding it must discuss the consequences of disclosing the sought-after information.” Further, “the withholding agency must supply ‘a relatively detailed justification, specifically identifying the reasons why a particular exemption is relevant and correlating those claims with the particular part of a withheld document to which they apply.’”

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 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. Claims of nonsegregability must be made with the same degree of detail as required for claims of exemptions in a *Vaughn* index. If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically that it is not reasonable to segregate portions of the record for release.

**You should institute a preservation hold on information responsive to this request.** American Oversight intends to pursue all legal avenues to enforce its right of access under FOIA, including litigation if necessary. Accordingly, DHS is on notice that litigation is reasonably foreseeable.

To ensure that this request is properly construed, that searches are conducted in an adequate but efficient manner, and that extraneous costs are not incurred, 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 DHS can decrease the likelihood of costly and time-consuming litigation in the future.

Where possible, please provide responsive material in electronic format by email or in PDF or TIF 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.

**Fee Waiver Request**

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) and 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k), American Oversight requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. The subject of this request concerns the operations of the federal government, and the disclosures will likely contribute to a better understanding of relevant government procedures by the general public in a

---

5 *Founding Church of Scientology v. Bell*, 603 F.2d 945, 949 (D.C. Cir. 1979).


7 *Id.* at 224 (citing *Mead Data Central, Inc. v. U.S. Dep’t of the Air Force*, 566 F.2d 242, 251 (D.C. Cir. 1977)).

8 *Mead Data Central*, 566 F.2d at 261.
significant way.\textsuperscript{9} Moreover, the request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.\textsuperscript{10}

American Oversight requests a waiver of fees because disclosure of the requested information is “in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government.”\textsuperscript{11} There has been extensive media coverage of and public attention on the administration’s new policy of separating immigrant parents and children when they cross at the border.\textsuperscript{12} This request goes directly to this action by the federal government. Moreover, the requested records will significantly increase the general public’s understanding of the origins of the policy, the guidance the administration is disseminating to implement the policy, the infrastructure in place to tend to these children, and what outside stakeholders are influencing the decision.

This request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.\textsuperscript{13} 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.\textsuperscript{14} American Oversight has demonstrated its commitment to the public disclosure of documents and creation of editorial content. For example, after receiving records regarding an ethics waiver received by a senior DOJ attorney, American Oversight promptly posted the records to its website\textsuperscript{15} and

\textsuperscript{9} 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(1)(i).
\textsuperscript{10} 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(1)(ii).
\textsuperscript{11} 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(1)(i); see also 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(2)(i)-(iv).
\textsuperscript{13} 6 C.F.R. § 5.11(k)(1)(ii), (3)(i)-(ii).
published an analysis of what the records reflected about DOJ’s process for ethics waivers. Additionally, this particular FOIA request is part of a public project conducted by American Oversight called “Audit the Wall,” where the organization is gathering and analyzing information and commenting on public releases of information related to the administration’s proposed construction of a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Accordingly, American Oversight qualifies for a fee waiver.

**Conclusion**

We share a common mission to promote transparency in government. American Oversight looks forward to working with DHS on this request. If you do not understand any part of this request, have any questions, or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records, please contact Cerissa Cafasso at foia@americanoversight.org or 202.869.5244. 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,

Austin R. Evers
Executive Director
American Oversight

---


17 *Audit the Wall, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT*, https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/audit-the-wall.