

March 9, 2018

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

BOEM FOIA Officer 45600 Woodland Road, Sterling, Virginia 20166 boemfoia@boem.gov

Re: Expedited Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear FOIA Officer:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and the implementing regulations of the Department of the Interior (DOI), 43 C.F.R. Part 2, American Oversight makes the following request for records.

On April 28, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order that called for expanding federal coastal areas that are available for offshore drilling.¹ On January 4, 2018, DOI announced its plan for this expansion that included opening areas of the coast of Florida for drilling.² Florida's Governor Rick Scott promptly expressed his opposition, and, on January 9, Secretary Zinke announced that he was "taking #Florida off the table for offshore oil and gas."³ Twelve other states

America's Coasts: 'We're Opening It Up.,'WASH. POST, Apr. 28, 2017,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2017/04/28/trump-signs-executiveorder-to-expand-offshore-drilling-and-analyze-marine-sanctuaries-oil-and-gaspotential/?utm_term=.2088897828ce.

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/04/climate/trump-offshore-drilling.html.

⁸ Secretary Ryan Zinke (@SecretaryZinke), TWITTER (Jan. 9, 2018, 6:48 PM), <u>https://twitter.com/secretaryzinke/status/950876846698180608</u>; *see also* Hiroko Tabuchi, *Trump Administration Drops Florida From Offshore Drilling Plan*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 9, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/09/climate/trump-florida-offshore-drilling.html.



¹ See Exec. Order No. 13,795 of Apr. 28, 2017, 82 Fed. Reg. 20,815 (May 3, 2017); see also Coral Davenport, Trump Is Expected to Sign Orders that Could Expand Access to Fossil Fuels, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 25, 2017, <u>https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/25/us/politics/national-monuments-energy-drilling.html</u>; Juliet Eilperin, Trump Signs Executive Order to Expand Drilling Off

² BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MGMT., 2019-2024 NATIONAL OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF OIL AND GAS LEASING DRAFT PROPOSED PROGRAM (Jan. 2018), <u>https://www.boem.gov/NP-Draft-Proposed-Program-2019-2024/</u>; see also Lisa Friedman, *Trump Moves to Open Nearly All* Offshore Waters to Drilling, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 4, 2018,

are seeking a similar exemption.⁴ Eight of those twelve states have gubernatorial elections this November, and five other coastal states that did not sign onto the letter also have gubernatorial elections.⁵ American Oversight seeks to shed light on the influences on the administration's decisions regarding whether and where offshore drilling will be allowed to better inform voters as they head to the polls this fall.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) produce the following within twenty business days and seeks expedited review of this request for the reasons identified below:

- 1. All records reflecting communications (including emails, email attachments, text messages, telephone call logs, calendar invitations/entries, meeting notices, meeting agendas, informational material, draft legislation, talking points, or other materials) regarding offshore drilling generally or the "2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program" specifically between BOEM and any of the following:
 - a. Governor Kay Ivey of Alabama or anyone from her office;
 - b. Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama or anyone from his office;
 - c. Then-Senator Luther Strange of Alabama or anyone from his office;
 - d. Senator Doug Jones of Alabama or anyone from his office;
 - e. Governor Jerry Brown of California or anyone from his office;
 - f. Senator Dianne Feinstein of California or anyone from her office;
 - g. Senator Kamala Harris of California or anyone from her office;
 - h. Governor Dan Malloy of Connecticut or anyone from his office;
 - i. Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut or anyone from his office;
 - j. Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut or anyone from his office;
 - k. Governor Nathan Deal of Georgia or anyone from his office;
 - l. Senator Johnny Isakson of Georgia or anyone from his office;
 - m. Senator David Perdue of Georgia or anyone from his office;
 - n. Governor Paul LePage of Maine or anyone from his office;
 - o. Senator Susan Collins of Maine or anyone from her office;
 - p. Senator Angus King of Maine or anyone from his office;
 - q. Governor Larry Hogan of Maryland or anyone from his office;
 - r. Senator Ben Cardin of Maryland or anyone from his office;

⁴ Camila Domonoske, *After Florida Gets Offshore Drilling Exemption, Other States Ask for the Same*, NPR (Jan. 10, 2018, 3:01 PM), <u>https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/01/10/577064733/after-florida-gets-offshore-drilling-exemption-other-states-ask-for-the-same</u>; Umair Irfan, *Florida Got an Exemption to the Offshore Drilling Plan. Now 12 Other States Want One Too*, Vox (Jan. 12, 2018, 11:59 AM), <u>https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2018/1/10/16870450/ocs-offshore-drilling-oil-gas-lease-zinke-florida</u>.

⁵ See Amber Phillips, The Top 10 Gubernatorial Races of 2018, WASH. POST, Jan. 6, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/01/06/the-top-10-gubernatorial-races-of-2018/?utm_term=.ca34fe9e082e.

s.	Senator Chris Van Hollen of Maryland or anyone from his office;
t.	Governor Charlie Baker of Massachusetts or anyone from his office;
u.	Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts or anyone from her office;
v.	Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts or anyone from his office;
w.	Governor Chris Sununu of New Hampshire or anyone from his office;
х.	Senator Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire or anyone from her office;
у.	Senator Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire or anyone from her office;
Z.	Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York or anyone from his office;
aa.	Senator Chuck Schumer of New York or anyone from his office;
bb.	Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York or anyone from her office;
cc.	Governor Kate Brown of Oregon or anyone from her office;
dd.	Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon or anyone from his office;
ee.	Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon or anyone from his office;
ff.	Governor Gina Raimondo of Rhode Island or anyone from her office;
gg.	Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island or anyone from his office;
hh.	Senator Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island or anyone from his office;
ii.	Governor Henry McMaster of South Carolina or anyone from his office;
jj.	Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina or anyone from his office;
kk.	Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina or anyone from his office;
ll.	Governor Greg Abbott of Texas or anyone from his office;
mm.	Senator John Cornyn of Texas or anyone from his office; or
nn.	Senator Ted Cruz of Texas or anyone from his office.

- 2. All final recommendations, memoranda, analyses, or decisions regarding whether to exempt or otherwise remove any of the following states from the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program:
 - a. Alabama;
 - b. California;
 - c. Connecticut;
 - d. Georgia;
 - e. Maine;
 - f. Maryland;
 - g. Massachusetts;

- h. New Hampshire;
- i. New York;
- j. Oregon;
- k. Rhode Island;
- l. South Carolina; or
- m. Texas.

Please provide all responsive records from April 1, 2017, to the date the search is conducted.

BOEM may limit its search to the following offices:

- The Office of the Director;
- The Office of Congressional Affairs; and
- The Office of Public Affairs.

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 BOEM 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.⁶ 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.⁷

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 BOEM'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.⁸ Furthermore, agencies that have adopted the National Archives and

⁶ See Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy, 827 F.3d 145, 149–50 (D.C. Cir. 2016); cf. Judicial Watch, Inc. v. Kerry, 844 F.3d 952, 955–56 (D.C. Cir. 2016).

⁷ 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)).

⁸ Presidential Memorandum–Managing Government Records, 76 Fed. Reg. 75,423 (Nov. 28, 2011), <u>https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/28/presidential-memorandum-managing-government-records</u>; Office of Mgmt. & Budget, Exec. Office of the President, Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments & Independent Agencies,

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 BOEM's archiving tools would capture that email under Capstone. Accordingly, American Oversight insists that BOEM 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."⁹ 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 U.S. 977 (1974). 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."¹⁰ 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."¹¹ 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."¹²

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.¹³ 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, BOEM is on notice that litigation is reasonably foreseeable.

[&]quot;Managing Government Records Directive," M-12-18 (Aug. 24, 2012), https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/m-12-18.pdf.

⁹ FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 § 2 (Pub. L. No. 114–185).

¹⁰ Founding Church of Scientology v. Bell, 603 F.2d 945, 949 (D.C. Cir. 1979).

¹¹ King v. U.S. Dep't of Justice, 830 F.2d 210, 223-24 (D.C. Cir. 1987) (emphasis in original).

¹² *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)).

¹³ *Mead Data Central*, 566 F.2d at 261.

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 BOEM 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 43 C.F.R. § 2.45(a), 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 significant way.¹⁴ Moreover, the request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.¹⁵

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 government operations or activities."¹⁶ There is significant public interest in offshore drilling, both from those who support expansion and those who oppose it.¹⁷ The leadership of several states have expressed concern about their shores being opened for drilling.¹⁸ In light of the significant public interest in DOI's initiative, disclosure of the requested information will contribute significantly to public understanding. Moreover, as discussed below, American Oversight has both the ability and the intention to effectively convey the information it receives to the public.

This request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.¹⁹ 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

¹⁴ 43 C.F.R. § 2.45(a)(1).

¹⁵ 43 C.F.R. § 2.45(a)(2).

¹⁶ 43 C.F.R. § 2.45(a)(1); see also 43 C.F.R. § 2.48(a)(1)-(4).

¹⁷ See Davenport, supra note 1; Eilperin, supra note 1; Friedman, supra note 2; Tabuchi, supra note 3.

¹⁸ Domonoske, *supra* note 4; Irfan, *supra* note 4.

¹⁹ 43 C.F.R. § 2.45(a)(2); 43 C.F.R. § 2.48(b)(1)-(3).

promotes their availability on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.²⁰ 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,²¹ American Oversight promptly posted the records to its website and published an analysis of what the records reflected about DOJ's process for ethics waivers.²² As another example, American Oversight has a project 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.²³

Accordingly, American Oversight qualifies for a fee waiver.

Application for Expedited Processing

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E) and 43 C.F.R. § 2.20(a)(2), American Oversight requests that BOEM expedite the processing of this request.

I certify to be true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, that there is an urgent need to inform the public about the federal government activity that is the subject of this request. The information American Oversight seeks concerns "a matter of a current exigency to the American public."²⁴ There was significant public outcry after the 2019-2024 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Draft Proposed Program was announced,²⁵ and significant public interest in

²⁰ American Oversight currently has approximately 11,800 page likes on Facebook and 40,900 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, FACEBOOK, <u>https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight</u> (last visited Mar. 8, 2018); American Oversight (@weareoversight), TWITTER, <u>https://twitter.com/weareoversight</u> (last visited Mar. 8, 2018).

²³ Audit the Wall, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <u>www.auditthewall.org</u>.

²¹ DOJ Civil Division Response Noel Francisco Compliance, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, https://www.americanoversight.org/document/doj-civil-division-response-noel-franciscocompliance.

²² Francisco & the Travel Ban: What We Learned from the DOJ Documents, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <u>https://www.americanoversight.org/francisco-the-travel-ban-what-we-learned-from-the-doj-documents</u>.

²⁴ Al-Fayed v. Cent. Intelligence Agency, 254 F.3d 300, 310 (D.C. Cir. 2001) (quoting H.R. Rep. No. 104-795, at 26 (1996), reprinted in 1996 U.S.C.C.A.N. 3448, 3469).

²⁵ Kevin Miller, *Maine Critics Throw Cold Water on Trump Administration's Offshore Drilling Plan*, PRESS HERALD (Mar. 7, 2018, 12:29 PM), <u>https://www.pressherald.com/2018/03/07/feds-to-hold-public-meeting-wednesday-in-augusta-on-offshore-drilling-plan/;</u> Chris Liedle, *Coastal Cities Announce Public Opposition to Federal Proposal for Offshore Drilling*, KATU NEWS, Mar. 8, 2018, <u>http://katu.com/news/local/coastal-cities-announce-public-opposition-to-federal-proposal-for-offshore-drilling</u>; Zach Driver, *Rally to Raleigh Against Offshore Drilling*, WECT (Feb. 26, 2018, 10:48 AM), <u>http://www.wect.com/story/37586126/rally-to-raleigh-against-offshore-drilling</u>; Lauren Sommer, *California Cities Could Wield Zoning Laws Against Offshore Drilling Plan*, KQED, Feb. 8, 2018, <u>https://www.kqed.org/science/1919695/california-cities-could-wield-zoning-laws-against-offshore-drilling-plan</u>; Will Doran, *North Carolina Won't Get Another Chance to Speak*

other states receiving an exemption as Florida did.²⁶ DOI's plan is set to be implemented in the coming months,²⁷ and voters in states with gubernatorial elections this year have an urgent need to know how DOI's proposed plan will affect them. In order to participate meaningfully in this November's elections and the debate over whether and to what extent to allow drilling off their states' shores, it is essential for the American public to understand DOI's plans in this regard.²⁸

I further certify that American Oversight is primarily engaged in disseminating information to the public. 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. Similar to other organizations that have been found to satisfy the criteria necessary to qualify for expedition,²⁰ American Oversight "gathers information of potential interest to a segment of the public, uses its editorial skills to turn the raw material into a distinct work, and distributes that work to an audience."²⁰ American Oversight uses the information gathered, and its analysis of it, to educate the public through reports, press releases, and other media. American Oversight also makes materials it gathers available on its public website and promote their availability on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.³¹ 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 website²² and published an analysis of what the

https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/10/climate/coastal-drilling-florida-exempt-zinke.html.

²⁸ See RJ Reinhart, In the News: Offshore Drilling, GALLUP, Jan. 5, 2018,

http://news.gallup.com/poll/225053/news-offshore-drilling.aspx; Darryl Fears, *Trump Administration Plan Would Widely Expand Drilling in U.S. Continental Waters*, WASH. POST, Jan. 4, 2018, <u>https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2018/01/04/trump-</u> administration-plans-to-allow-drilling-off-all-u-s-waters/?utm_term=.04b718403f02.

on Trump's Offshore Drilling Plan, NEWS OBSERVER (Feb. 26, 2018, 5:34 PM),

http://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article202250419.html; Sharon Bernstein, *Trump Offshore Oil Drilling Plan Draws Protest in California*, REUTERS (Feb. 8, 2018, 9:04 AM), https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-drilling-offshore/trump-offshore-oildrilling-plan-draws-protest-in-california-idUSKBN1FS26O.

²⁶ Domonoske, *supra* note 4; Irfan, *supra* note 4; Coral Davenport, *Florida Is Exempted from Coastal Drilling. Other States Ask, 'Why Not Us?*', N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 10, 2018,

²⁷ Emma Hinchliffe, *Trump Offshore Drilling Plan Opens Almost Entire U.S. Coastline to Oil and Gas Companies*, FORTUNE, Jan. 4, 2018, <u>http://fortune.com/2018/01/04/trump-offshore-drilling/</u>.

²⁹ See ACLU v. U.S. Dep't of Justice, 321 F. Supp. 2d 24, 30–31 (D.D.C. 2004); EPIC v. Dep't of Defense, 241 F. Supp. 2d 5, 15 (D.D.C. 2003).

³⁰ ACLU, 321 F. Supp. 2d at 29 n.5 (quoting EPIC, 241 F. Supp. 2d at 11).

³¹ American Oversight currently has approximately 11,800 page likes on Facebook and 40,900 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, FACEBOOK, <u>https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight</u> (last visited Mar. 8, 2018); American Oversight (@weareoversight), TWITTER, <u>https://twitter.com/weareoversight</u> (last visited Mar. 8, 2018).

³² DOJ Civil Division Response Noel Francisco Compliance, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, https://www.americanoversight.org/document/doj-civil-division-response-noel-franciscocompliance.

records reflected about DOJ's process for ethics waivers.³³ Additionally, as another example, American Oversight has a project 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.³⁴

Accordingly, American Oversight's request satisfies the criteria for expedition.

Conclusion

We share a common mission to promote transparency in government. American Oversight looks forward to working with BOEM 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 <u>foia@americanoversight.org</u> 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,

Austritium

Austin R. Evers Executive Director American Oversight

³³ Francisco & the Travel Ban: What We Learned from the DOJ Documents, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <u>https://www.americanoversight.org/francisco-the-travel-ban-what-we-learned-from-the-doj-documents</u>.

³⁴ Audit the Wall, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <u>www.auditthewall.org</u>.