AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

September 7, 2017

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20210
FOIARequest@dol.gov

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear Freedom of Information Officer:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and the implementing regulations of the Department of Labor (DOL), 29 C.F.R. Part 70, American Oversight makes the following request for records.

In early 2016, heating and air conditioning manufacturer Carrier Corporation announced that it would move over 2,000 jobs from plants in Indiana to Mexico.[1] Then, shortly after the 2016 presidential election, Carrier announced that it would keep more than 1,000 of those jobs in Indiana, citing financial incentives from Indiana and the possibility of pro-business policies under the Trump administration.[2] In May 2017, Carrier announced that it would begin laying off hundreds of workers from those same plants.[3]

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[1] Kris Turner, *Carrier in Indy, UTEC in Huntington to Move Units to Mexico, Costing 2,100 Jobs*, INDYSTAR (Feb. 12, 2016, 10:42 AM), http://www.indystar.com/story/money/2016/02/10/carrier-move-indy-unit-mexico-eliminate-1400-jobs/80181804/; Nick Carey, *Anger, Resignation as Massive Pay Gap Prompts Carrier's Mexico Move*, REUTERS (Feb. 16, 2016, 5:33 PM), http://www.reuters.com/article/us-carriercorp-layoffs-idUSKCN0VP2R6.

[2] David Shepardson & Ginger Gibson, *Carrier to Keep Jobs in U.S. After Trump Offers State Incentives*, HUFFINGTON POST (Nov. 30, 2016, 7:28 PM), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/carrier-jobs-trump_us_583f6c49e4b09e21702cb21c; Ted Mann, *Carrier Will Receive $7 Million in Tax Breaks to Keep Jobs in Indiana*, WALL ST. J. (Dec. 2, 2016, 10:10 AM), https://www.wsj.com/articles/indiana-gives-7-million-in-tax-breaks-to-keep-carrier-jobs-1480608461.

[3] Danielle Paquette, *Trump Said He Would Save Jobs at Carrier. The Layoffs Start July 20.*, WASH. POST, May 24, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/05/24/here-is-the-number-of-jobs-carrier-is-moving-to-mexico-after-trump-said-hed-save-them/?utm_term=.f01b10db4495; Harriet Sinclair, *Remember the Carrier Jobs Trump 'Saved'? Company Announces 600 Layoffs Before Christmas*, NEWSWEEK (May 23, 2017, 4:11 PM), http://www.newsweek.com/carrier-company-where-trump-rescued-800-jobs-now-announces-600-layoffs-ahead-614352; Tony Cook & James Briggs, *Carrier Lays Off First 300 Employees on Six-Month Anniversary of Trump's Presidency*, INDYSTAR (July 19, 2017, 2:22 PM),

American Oversight seeks to understand what role the Trump administration played—if any—in Carrier's series of decisions regarding whether to eliminate jobs from its facilities in Indiana.

Requested Records

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

> All communications with any member of the Trump presidential campaign, the Trump transition team, or employees of the Trump White House regarding (a) the possibility that United Technologies Corporation or Carrier Corporation might move jobs from Indiana to Mexico or any other location, or (b) any decision by either of those companies to move or not move jobs out of Indiana.
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> Please provide all responsive records from November 8, 2016, to the date the search is conducted.
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> The search for responsive records should include all individuals and locations where records are likely to exist, including but not limited to the Office of the Secretary, the front office of the Office of the Solicitor, the Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Bureau of International Labor Affairs, the Office of Public Engagement, 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 your agency 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

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http://www.indystar.com/story/news/politics/2017/07/19/carrier-lays-off-300-6-month-anniversary-trump-presidency/491205001/.

business conducted using unofficial systems or stored outside of official files is subject to the Federal Records Act and FOIA.[4] **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.**[5]

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 your agency'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.**[6] **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 your agency's archiving tools would capture that email under Capstone. Accordingly, American Oversight insists that your agency 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."[7] 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

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[4] *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).

[5] *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)).

[6] Presidential Memorandum—Managing Government Records, 76 Fed. Reg. 75,423 (Nov. 28, 2011), https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/28/presidential-memorandum-managing-government-records; Office of Mgmt. & Budget, Exec. Office of the President, Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments & Independent Agencies, "Managing Government Records Directive," M-12-18 (Aug. 24, 2012), https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/m-12-18.pdf.

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

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."[8] 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."[9] 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.'"[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. 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.[11] 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, your agency 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, we 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 29 C.F.R. § 70.41(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

[8] *Founding Church of Scientology v. Bell*, 603 F.2d 945, 949 (D.C. Cir. 1979).
[9] *King v. U.S. Dep't of Justice*, 830 F.2d 210, 223–24 (D.C. Cir. 1987) (emphasis in original).
[10] *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)).
[11] *Mead Data Central*, 566 F.2d at 261.

contribute to public understanding of those operations.[12] Moreover, the request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.[13]

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.[14] The requested records would reveal what efforts the Trump administration has taken—if any—to keep Carrier's valuable manufacturing jobs in this country, rather than being shifted abroad. The creation and maintenance of jobs in the U.S. market is one of the central drivers of the U.S. economy and a metric on which every administration is judged;[15] the American people deserve to know what steps the Trump administration is taking to achieve that goal and whether (or not) those efforts have been effective.

This request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.[16] 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.[17] 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,[18] 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.[19] 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

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[12] 29 C.F.R. § 70.41(a)(1)(i).
[13] 29 C.F.R. § 70.41(a)(1)(ii).
[14] 29 C.F.R. § 70.41(a)(1)(i); 29 C.F.R. § 70.41(a)(2)(i)-(iv).
[15] *See, e.g.*, John W. Schoen, *FINAL REPORT CARD: Here's How Many Jobs Were Created Under Obama*, CNBC (Jan. 6, 2017, 4:17 PM), http://www.cnbc.com/2016/07/18/obamas-record-on-jobs-versus-five-other-presidents.html.
[16] 15 C.F.R. § 4.11(l)(1)(ii), (3)(i)-(ii).
[17] American Oversight currently has over 11,200 page likes on Facebook, and over 33,900 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, FACEBOOK, https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/ (last visited Sept. 5, 2017); American Oversight (@weareoversight), TWITTER, https://twitter.com/weareoversight (last visited Sept. 5, 2017).
[18] *DOJ Civil Division Response Noel Francisco Compliance*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, https://www.americanoversight.org/document/doj-civil-division-response-noel-francisco-compliance.
[19] *Francisco & the Travel Ban: What We Learned from the DOJ Documents*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, https://www.americanoversight.org/francisco-the-travel-ban-what-we-learned-from-the-doj-documents.

information related to the administration's proposed construction of a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border.[20]

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 your agency 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 Sara Creighton at foia@americanoversight.org or (202) 869-5246. 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

[20] *Audit the Wall*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, www.auditthewall.org.