



August 11, 2020

VIA FOIA Online

Vernon Curry
FOIA Officer
U.S. Census Bureau, Room 3J235
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233-3700
Via FOIAOnline

Re: 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 Commerce, 15 C.F.R. Part 4, American Oversight makes the following request for records.

On June 23, 2020, President Trump announced the addition of two new political appointees to the U.S. Census Bureau (Census Bureau), Nathaniel Cogley and Adam Korzeniewski.¹ The appointments have garnered criticism for possibly being part of an attempt to politicize the Census Bureau and improperly influence the 2020 census.² This development follows an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the administration to add a citizenship question to the census, a move that has also been seen as a way to suppress the responses of non-citizens and create an undercount.³ The census is used to determine legislative apportionment, redistricting boundaries, and federal funding for states and

¹ Tara Bahrapour, *White House Adds High-Level Officials to Census Bureau, Raising Fears of Politicization*, Wash. Post (June 23, 2020, 6:43 PM), https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/white-house-adds-high-level-officials-to-census-bureau-raising-fears-of-politicization/2020/06/23/04ac27fa-b590-11ea-a510-55bf26485c93_story.html; Hansi Lo Wang, *Trump Appointees Join Census Bureau; Democrats Concerned Over Partisan 'Games'*, NPR (June 23, 2020, 10:51 PM), <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/23/882433973/trump-appointees-join-census-bureau-democrats-concerned-over-partisan-games>.

² *Id.*

³ William H. Frey, *America Wins as Trump Abandons the Citizenship Question from the 2020 Census*, Brookings Inst. (July 12, 2019), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2019/07/12/america-wins-trump-abandons-the-citizenship-question-from-2020-census/>.



localities—and thus an inaccurate count would have far-reaching and significant implications for the coming decade.⁴

American Oversight seeks records that could shed light on the activities of Census Bureau officials.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that the Census Bureau produce the following records within twenty business days:

All calendars and calendar entries for the agency officials listed below, including any calendars maintained on their behalf, reflecting events that took place from September 27, 2019, through the date the search is conducted.

For calendar entries created in Outlook or similar programs, the documents should be produced in “memo” form to include all invitees, any notes, and all attachments. Please do not limit your search to Outlook calendars—we request the production of any calendar—paper or electronic, whether on government-issued or personal devices—used to track or coordinate how these individuals allocate their time on agency business.

The search should include any calendars associated with an agency official’s individual email account, as well as any official calendars maintained for the official, including by his or her administrative assistant or scheduler.

Specified Officials

- i. Dr. Steven Dillingham, Director
- ii. Dr. Ron Jarmin, Deputy Director
- iii. Kevin Quinley, Special Advisor and Director of Strategic Initiatives
- iv. Christa Jones, Chief of Staff⁵
- v. Joske Bautista, Senior Advisor
- vi. Nathaniel Cogley, Deputy Director of Policy

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ In light of reporting that Jones communicated using both official government email and a personal email account (xtadjones@hotmail.com) regarding agency business, American Oversight requests that the Census Bureau include any calendars or calendar entries associated with Ms. Jones’ personal email account that pertain to agency business. See Hansi Lo Wang, *Emails Connect Census Official With GOP Strategist on Citizenship Question*, NPR (June 15, 2019, 4:16 AM), <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/15/732669380/emails-connect-census-official-with-gop-strategist-on-citizenship-question>. Furthermore, to the extent any other Census Bureau officials on this list used their personal accounts to conduct agency business, American Oversight requests that both their calendars associated with their official and personal emails be searched for responsive records.

vii. Adam Korzeniewski, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Director

Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) and your agency's regulations, 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. Moreover, the request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.

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 operations or activities of the government."⁶ The public has a significant interest in the activities of top Census Bureau officials. Records with the potential to shed light on this matter would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the federal government, including whether any Census Bureau officials' actions are improperly influencing the 2020 census. American Oversight is committed to transparency and makes the responses agencies provide to FOIA 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.

This request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.⁷ 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.⁸

American Oversight has also demonstrated its commitment to the public disclosure of documents and creation of editorial content through regular substantive analyses posted to its website.⁹ Examples reflecting this commitment to the public disclosure of documents and the creation of editorial content include the posting of records related to

⁶ 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

⁷ *See id.*

⁸ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,500 page likes on Facebook and 104,200 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Aug. 11, 2020); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Aug. 11, 2020).

⁹ *See generally* News, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>.

the Trump Administration’s contacts with Ukraine and analyses of those contacts;¹⁰ posting records and editorial content about the federal government’s response to the Coronavirus pandemic;¹¹ posting records received as part of American Oversight’s “Audit the Wall” project to gather and analyze information related to the administration’s proposed construction of a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border, and analyses of what those records reveal;¹² the posting of records related to an ethics waiver received by a senior Department of Justice attorney and an analysis of what those records demonstrated regarding the Department’s process for issuing such waivers;¹³ and posting records and analysis of federal officials’ use of taxpayer dollars to charter private aircraft or use government planes for unofficial business.¹⁴

Accordingly, American Oversight qualifies for a fee waiver.

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:

¹⁰ *Trump Administration’s Contacts with Ukraine*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/the-trump-administrations-contacts-with-ukraine>.

¹¹ See generally *The Trump Administration’s Response to Coronavirus*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/the-trump-administrations-response-to-coronavirus>; see, e.g., *CDC Calendars from 2018 and 2019: Pandemic-Related Briefings and Meetings*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/cdc-calendars-from-2018-and-2019-pandemic-related-briefings-and-meetings>.

¹² See generally *Audit the Wall*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/audit-the-wall>; see, e.g., *Border Wall Investigation Report: No Plans, No Funding, No Timeline, No Wall*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/border-wall-investigation-report-no-plans-no-funding-no-timeline-no-wall>.

¹³ *DOJ Records Relating to Solicitor General Noel Francisco’s Recusal*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/document/doj-civil-division-response-noel-francisco-compliance>; *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>.

¹⁴ See generally *Swamp Airlines: Chartered Jets at Taxpayer Expense*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/swamp-airlines-private-jets-taxpayer-expense>; see, e.g., *New Information on Pompeo’s 2017 Trips to His Home State*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/new-information-on-pompeos-2017-trips-to-his-home-state>.

- 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.
- Please search all relevant records or systems containing records regarding agency business. 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. Records of official business conducted using unofficial systems or stored outside of official files are subject to the Federal Records Act and FOIA.¹⁵ 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, by intent or through negligence, failed to meet their obligations.¹⁶
- Please use all tools available to your agency to conduct a complete and efficient search for potentially responsive records. Agencies are subject to government-wide requirements to manage agency information electronically,¹⁷ and many agencies have adopted the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Capstone program, or similar policies. These systems provide options for searching emails and other electronic records in a manner that is reasonably likely to be more complete than just searching individual custodian files. For example, a custodian may have deleted a responsive email from his or her email program, but your agency’s archiving tools may capture that email under Capstone. At the same time, custodian searches are still necessary; agencies may not have direct access to files stored in .PST files, outside of network drives, in paper format, or in personal email accounts.
- In the event some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the

¹⁵ 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).

¹⁶ See *Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy*, No. 14-cv-765, slip op. at 8 (D.D.C. Dec. 12, 2016).

¹⁷ 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>.

requested records. If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically why 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 Emma Lewis at foia@americanoversight.org or (202) 919-6303. 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