



January 26, 2021

VIA EMAIL

Justin Riches
Public Records Counsel
Arizona House of Representatives
1700 W. Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85007-2844
jriches@azleg.gov

Re: Public Records Request

Dear Public Records Officer:

Pursuant to the Arizona Public Records Law, A.R.S. §§ 39-121 et seq., American Oversight makes the following request for records.

On January 6, 2021, Arizona Rep. Mark Finchem participated in the rally outside of the U.S. Capitol, from which a riotous crowd stormed the building. Rep. Finchem stated that he had intended to give a speech at the rally but ultimately did not.¹ In his newsletter, he later wrote, “What about the claims that the crowd was a mob? Were they loud? Yes. Were they hostile? No. Did they attack the police? No, in fact I heard many [protesters] say ‘thank you,’ and ‘bless you’ as they walked by officers.”² During the riot, four people died including one Capitol Police officer.

American Oversight seeks records with the potential to shed light on Rep. Finchem’s potential participation, knowledge of, and involvement in an attempt to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that the Arizona House of Representatives promptly produce the following records:

- 1) All email communications (including email messages, complete email chains, email attachments, calendar invitations, and calendar attachments) sent by Rep. Mark Finchem containing any of the key terms listed below.

¹Josh Kelety, *Arizona Lawmaker Mark Finchem Struggles to Keep His Capitol Riot Story Straight*, Phoenix New Times (Jan. 11, 2021, 3:40 PM),

<https://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/arizona-mark-finchem-doubles-down-on-defending-capitol-rioters-11524876>.

² *Id.*



Please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2021, through the date a search is conducted.

Key terms:

- i. Capitol
- ii. "Stop the steal"
- iii. "Save America"
- iv. Storm
- v. Trump
- vi. Biden
- vii. Congress
- viii. DC
- ix. D.C.
- x. Washington
- xi. RNC
- xii. DNC
- xiii. Patriot
- xiv. Patriots
- xv. Pelosi
- xvi. "Our House"
- xvii. MAGA
- xviii. "great again"
- xix. caravan

In an effort to accommodate your office and reduce the number of potentially responsive records to be processed and produced, American Oversight has limited Item 1 of its request to communications sent by Rep. Finchem. This means, for example, that with respect to emails, both Rep. Finchem's response to an email containing one of the listed key terms and the initial received message are responsive to this request and should be produced.

- 2) All text message chains/conversations, or messages on similar applications (such as Signal, WhatsApp, or Facebook Messenger) sent to or received by Rep. Mark Finchem containing any of the key terms listed in Item 1 above.

Please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2021, through the date a search is conducted.

American Oversight requests complete text threads/conversations. This means, for example, if Rep. Finchem sent or received a text message containing any of the key terms listed above, the complete text thread/conversation for the timeframe listed above should be produced, and not just the message containing the key term.

- 3) Records reflecting any and all expenditures of Rep. Mark Finchem's trip on or about January 6, 2021 to Washington, DC, including, but not limited to, records of any reimbursements submitted by or on behalf of Rep. Finchem.

Responsive records would include, but are not limited to, hotel or other lodging invoices or receipts; legislature-issued charge card or travel card reports; receipts from airlines, rental car, or other transportation companies; records reflecting the cost of government transportation; receipts or other records reflecting the cost of meals or refreshments; or records reflecting per diem payments.

Please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2021, through the date a search is conducted.

Statement of Noncommercial Purpose

This request is made for noncommercial purposes. American Oversight seeks records regarding the communications and expenses from a representative who participated in a rally that grew into a riot. The events of January 6, including Rep. Finchem's role in them, have drawn both local³ and national media attention.⁴ Records with the potential to shed light on this issue would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the government, including whether and to what extent the representative was involved in the event's planning and aftermath.

Because American Oversight is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, this request is not in American Oversight's financial interest and is not made for a commercial purpose. 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.⁵

Because this request is made for noncommercial purposes, American Oversight requests that any fees charged in connection with processing this request be limited to copying

³ Josh Kelety, *Arizona Lawmaker Mark Finchem Struggles to Keep His Capitol Riot Story Straight*, Phoenix New Times (Jan. 11, 2021, 3:40 PM), <https://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/arizona-mark-finchem-doubles-down-on-defending-capitol-rioters-11524876>.

⁴ Soo Kim, *Every Republican State Legislator Spotted at Rally Before Capitol Riot*, Newsweek (Jan. 8, 2021, 10:27 AM), <https://www.newsweek.com/every-republican-state-legislator-rally-capitol-riot-1560007>.

⁵ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,600 page likes on Facebook and 105,400 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Jan. 14, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Jan. 15, 2021).

and postage charges, if applicable.⁶ 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. For instance, if the request seeks “communications,” please search all locations likely to contain communications, including relevant hard-copy files, correspondence files, appropriate locations on hard drives and shared drives, emails, text messages or other direct messaging systems (such as iMessage,) and voicemail messages.
- 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 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. 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.
- If any records are withheld in full or in part, pursuant to A.R.S. § 39-121.01(D)(2), please provide an index of records or categories of records that have been withheld and the reasons the records or categories of records have been withheld.
- In the event some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of

⁶ A.R.S. § 39-121.01(D)(1); *see also Hanania v. City of Tucson*, 128 Ariz. 135, 624 P.2d 332 (Ct. App. 1980). Furthermore, because this request is for noncommercial purposes, additional fees provided for under A.R.S. § 39-121.03(A) are not applicable and should not be assessed.

the 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 Khahilia Shaw at records@americanoversight.org or (202) 539-6507.

Sincerely,

/s/ Khahilia Shaw
on behalf of
American Oversight