



March 11, 2021

VIA EMAIL

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Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear FOIA Officers:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and the implementing regulations of the Department of Justice (DOJ), 28 C.F.R. Part 16, American Oversight makes the following request for records.

In January 2021, True the Vote, one of the various groups that launched legal challenges alleging widespread fraud in the 2020 presidential election, announced that former U.S. Department of Justice official Maureen Riordan had joined the organization with plans to spearhead a national voter list maintenance initiative.¹

American Oversight is seeking records concerning any contact between Riordan and True the Vote or other prominent groups advocating voting restrictions during her time at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Requested Records

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

1. All email communications (including emails, email attachments, calendar invitations, and attachments thereto) sent by (a) Maureen Riordan, who recently served as Senior Counsel to the Attorney General for Civil Rights and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Western District of Virginia, and (b) and of the external parties listed below.

External Parties:

- i. Catherine Engelbrecht (including, but not limited to, at catherine@truethevote.org)

¹ Press Release, True the Vote, Jan. 25, 2021.



- ii. James Bopp, Jr. (including, but not limited to, at jboppjr@aol.com or jbopp@bopplaw.com)
- iii. Anyone communicating on behalf of True the Vote (including, but not limited to, anyone communicating from an email address ending in @truethevote.org, @truethevote.com, or @bopplaw.com)
- iv. J. Christian Adams (including, but not limited to at adams@publicinterestlegal.org or any email address ending in @electionlawcenter.com)
- v. Logan Churchwell (including, but not limited to, at lchurchwell@publicinterestlegal.org or logan@truethevote.org)
- vi. Sue Becker (including, but not limited to, at sbecker@publicinterestlegal.org)
- vii. Anyone communicating on behalf of Public Interest Legal Foundation (including, but not limited to, anyone communicating from an email address ending in @publicinterestlegal.org)
- viii. Leonard Leo (including, but not limited to, at leonard.leo@fed-soc.org, leonard.leo@mindspring.com, ll@leonardleo.com, leonard.antonio.leo@gmail.com, or lleo@fed-soc.org)
- ix. Jonathan Bunch, Greg Mueller, or anyone communicating from an email address ending in @crcadvisors.com or @crcpublicrelations.com)
- x. Gary Marx (including, but not limited to gary@madisonstrategiesllc.com)
- xi. Carrie Severino (including, but not limited to carrie@judicialnetwork.org or carrie.severino@gmail.com)
- xii. Jason Stuckey (including, but not limited to, at jstuckey@bricker.com)
- xiii. Jason Torchinsky (including, but not limited to, at jtorchinsky@hvjt.law)
- xiv. Anyone communicating on behalf of Honest Elections Project (including, but not limited to, anyone communicating from an email address ending in @honestelections.org, @bricker.com, or @hvjt.law)
- xv. Anyone communicating on behalf of the Federalist Society (including, but not limited to, anyone communicating from an email address sending in fed-soc.org)
- xvi. Justin Clark (including, but not limited to, at the email address jrclark@michaelbest.com)
- xvii. Nathan Groth (including, but not limited to, at the email address ndgroth@michaelbest.com)
- xviii. Stefan Passantino (including, but not limited to, at the email address spassantino@michaelbest.com or stefanpassantino@onebox.com)
- xix. Hans von Spakovsky (including, but not limited to, at hans.vonspakovsky@heritage.org)
- xx. Kaitlynn Samalis (including, but not limited to, at Kaitlynn.samalis@heritage.org)
- xxi. Kris Kobach (including, but not limited to, kkobach@gmail.com)

2. All email communications (including emails, email attachments, calendar invitations, and attachments thereto) sent by Maureen Riordan, who recently served as Senior Counsel to the Attorney General for Civil Rights and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Western District of Virginia, containing any of the key terms listed below.

Key Terms:

- | | | | |
|-------|-------------------------|--------|----------------------|
| i. | “True the Vote” | xiii. | Spakovsky |
| ii. | TTV | xiv. | “Election fraud” |
| iii. | Engelbrecht | xv. | “Election integrity” |
| iv. | Bopp | xvi. | “Voter fraud” |
| v. | “Public Interest Legal” | xvii. | “Ballot fraud” |
| vi. | PILF | xviii. | “ballot integrity” |
| vii. | “Christian Adams” | xix. | “Stop the Steal” |
| viii. | Churchwell | xx. | “Vote dilution” |
| ix. | “Honest Elections” | xxi. | Absentee |
| x. | “Leonard Leo” | xxii. | Harvesting |
| xi. | “Justin Clark” | xxiii. | “Signature match” |
| xii. | Passantino | xxiv. | “Signature matches” |

In an effort to accommodate your office and reduce the number of potentially responsive records to be processed and produced, American Oversight has limited its requests to communications sent by Senior Counsel/Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Riordan. To be clear, however, American Oversight still requests that complete email chains be produced, displaying both sent and received messages. This means, for example, both Riordan’s response to one of the listed parties or response to an email containing one of the listed key terms and the initial received messages are responsive to this request and should be produced.

Please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2020, through the date the search is conducted.

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.”² The public has a significant interest in the Department of Justice’s role in the Trump campaign’s

² 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

recurring efforts to cast doubt on the integrity of the U.S. election infrastructure and the results of the 2020 presidential election.³ Records with the potential to shed light on this matter would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the federal government, including whether and to what extent a former Department of Justice official was in contact with groups—including her eventual employer—supporting former President Trump’s unfounded claims concerning election integrity. 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.⁴ 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.⁵

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.⁶ Examples reflecting this commitment to the public disclosure of documents and the creation of editorial content include the posting of records related to the Trump Administration’s contacts with Ukraine and analyses of those contacts;⁷ posting records and editorial content about the federal government’s response to the Coronavirus pandemic;⁸ posting records received as part of American Oversight’s

³ Katie Benner, *Watchdog to Examine Whether Justice Dept. Helped Trump Effort to Overturn Election*, New York Times, Jan. 25, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/25/us/politics/justice-department-inspector-general-trump-voter-fraud.html>.

⁴ See 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

⁵ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,600 page likes on Facebook and 105,200 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Jan. 22, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Jan. 22, 2021).

⁶ See generally *News*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>.

⁷ *Trump Administration’s Contacts with Ukraine*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/the-trump-administrations-contacts-with-ukraine>.

⁸ 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>.

“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;⁹ 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;¹⁰ and posting records and analysis of federal officials’ use of taxpayer dollars to charter private aircraft or use government planes for unofficial business.¹¹

Accordingly, American Oversight qualifies for a fee waiver.

Guidance Regarding the Search & Processing of Requested

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, WhatsApp, Signal, or Twitter direct messages), voicemail messages, instant messaging systems such as Lync or ICQ, and shared messages systems such as Slack.
- 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

⁹ 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>.

¹⁰ *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>.

¹¹ 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>.

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. Records of official business conducted using unofficial systems or stored outside of official files are subject to the Federal Records Act and FOIA.¹² 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.¹³
- 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,¹⁴ 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

¹² 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).

¹³ See *Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy*, No. 14-cv-765, slip op. at 8 (D.D.C. Dec. 12, 2016).

¹⁴ 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 Daniel McGrath at foia@americanoversight.org or (202) 897-4213. 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,

/s/ Daniel McGrath
Daniel McGrath
on behalf of
American Oversight