VIA U.S. MAIL

Bowie County Sheriff’s Office
100 North Stateline Avenue
Box 15
Texarkana, TX 75501

Re: Public Information Request

Dear Public Information Officer:

Pursuant to the Texas Public Information Act, as codified at Tex. Code ch. 552, American Oversight makes the following request for public records.

A February 2021 winter storm in Texas left millions without power for days.¹ Among those affected were incarcerated persons in Texas, who endured freezing cold temperatures and a lack of clean, running water in their facilities.² American Oversight seeks records with the potential to shed light on the impact of the winter storm on inmates held in the Bowie County Correctional Center during the storm.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that the Bowie County Sheriff’s Office promptly produce the following:

1. All records reflecting complaints filed by people detained at the Bowie County Correctional Center regarding any of the following:
   a) The provision of heat, hot or clean water, or medical care to people detained at the Bowie County Correctional Center;
   b) The ability of people detained at the Bowie County Correctional Center to communicate with legal counsel;
   c) Any limitation on the ability of people detained at the Bowie County Correctional Center to meet with visitors, legal counsel, or any other people not in the Bowie County Correctional Center; or

---

d) Complaints by people detained at the Bowie County Correctional Center regarding the conditions of their confinement.

2. Any requests by city, state, or federal government officials to visit, inspect, or otherwise gain access to the Bowie County Correctional Center.

Please provide all responsive records from February 8, 2021, through the date a search is conducted.

American Oversight seeks all responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. In conducting your search, please understand the term “record” in its 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.**

In addition, American Oversight insists that your office 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; governmental authorities may not have direct access to files stored in .PST files, outside of network drives, in paper format, or in personal email accounts.**

Please search all records regarding official business. **You may not exclude searches of files or emails in the personal custody of your officials, such as personal email accounts.** Emails conducting government business sent or received on the personal account of a governmental authority’s officer or employee constitutes a record for purposes of the Texas Public Information Act.³

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. If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically that 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 your office 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.

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 your office 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 Tex. Code § 552.267(a), American Oversight requests a waiver of
fees associated with processing this request for records because such a waiver “is in the
public interest because providing the copy of the information primarily benefits the
general public.” The requested records are directly related to the work of county
officials, with the potential to shed light on the impact on the jail population of the crisis
caused by the winter storm in February 2021. This is a subject of substantial public
interest in Texas. Accordingly, release of records that may help the public understand
the operations and activities of county officials is in the public interest.

Release of the requested records will primarily benefit the public. As a 501(c)(3)
nonprofit, American Oversight does not have a commercial purpose and the release of
the requested records is not in American Oversight’s financial interest, but is rather in
the public interest. American Oversight is committed to transparency and makes the
responses governmental authorities provide to public records requests publicly
available. As noted, the subject of this request is a matter of public interest, and the
public would benefit from an enhanced understanding of the government’s activities
through American Oversight’s analysis and publication of these records. 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.

---

4 Shepherd, *supra* note 2; Jolie McCullough, *Texas Jails and Prisons See Brutal Cold and
Overfilled Toilers in Winter Storm*, Texas Trib. (Feb. 18, 2021, 6:00 PM),
https://www.texastribune.org/2021/02/18/texas-jails-prisons-winter-storm/.
5 Tex. Code § 552.267(a).
6 American Oversight currently has approximately 15,700 followers on Facebook and
105,400 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook,
American Oversight has also demonstrated its commitment to the public disclosure of documents and creation of editorial content through numerous substantive analyses posted to its website. Examples reflecting this commitment to the public disclosure of documents and the creation of editorial content include the posting of records related to the organization’s investigations into misconduct and corruption in state governments; the posting of records related to the Trump Administration’s contacts with Ukraine and analyses of those contacts; posting records and editorial content about the federal government’s response to the Coronavirus pandemic; 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; the posting of records related to an ethics waiver received by a senior U.S. Department of Justice attorney and an analysis of what those records demonstrated regarding the Department’s process for issuing such waivers; and posting records and analysis of federal officials’ use of taxpayer dollars to charter private aircraft or use government planes for unofficial business.


Accordingly, American Oversight qualifies for a fee waiver. If your office denies our request for a fee waiver, please notify American Oversight of any anticipated fees or costs in excess of $40 prior to incurring such costs or fees.

**Conclusion**

We share a common mission to promote transparency in government. American Oversight looks forward to working with your county 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 Emma Lewis at records@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,

/s/ Emma Lewis
Emma Lewis
on behalf of
American Oversight