



July 16, 2021

VIA EMAIL

Public Records Coordinator
Office of the Attorney General
1885 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802
publicrecords@ag.louisiana.gov

Re: Public Records Law Request

Dear Records Custodian:

Pursuant to the Louisiana Public Records Law, La. Rev. Stat. Ann. 44:1 et seq., American Oversight makes the following request for records.

Records previously released¹ to American Oversight pursuant to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act indicate that Michael Farris, president of the Alliance Defending Freedom, advised South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson on potential challenges to the results of the 2020 presidential election.²

American Oversight seeks records with the potential to shed light on whether Mr. Farris also advised Attorney General Landry on similar matters.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that the Office of the Attorney General produce the following records within three business days:

All records reflecting communications (including emails, email attachments, text messages, messages on messaging platforms (such as Slack, GChat or Google Hangouts, Skype), or calendar invitations, calendar entries, meeting agendas, informational material, any handwritten or electronic notes taken during any oral communications, summaries of any oral communications, or other materials) between (a) Attorney General Jeff Landry, Solicitor General Elizabeth Merrill,

¹ *South Carolina Attorney General Communications with Specific Attorneys Associated with Texas' Election Lawsuit*, American Oversight, May 7, 2021,

<https://www.americanoversight.org/document/south-carolina-attorney-general-communications-with-specific-attorneys-associated-with-texas-election-lawsuit>.

² See Matt Shuham, *SC AG Strategized with Big-Wig Conservative Lawyers on Suit to Overturn Election, Records Show*, Talking Points Memo (Jul. 8, 2021, 10:14 AM),

<https://talkingpointsmemo.com/news/sc-ag-strategized-with-big-wig-conservative-lawyers-on-suit-to-overturn-election-records-show>.



or any person communicating on their behalf, such as a chief of staff, assistant, or scheduler, and (b) Alliance Defending Freedom president Michael Farris, whether in his official or personal capacity.

Please provide all responsive records from November 4, 2020, through the date of search.

Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with La. Rev. Stat. Ann. 44:32(C)(2), American Oversight requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. A waiver of fees for this request is appropriate, because American Oversight's use of the requested records "will be limited to a public purpose."³

This request is made solely for a public purpose.⁴ The general public has a significant interest in understanding the Attorney General's Office's reported efforts to overturn then President-elect Joe Biden's victories in key swing states.⁵ Records with the potential to shed light on this matter would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the government, including whether and to what extent officials in the Attorney General's Office coordinated with the leader of a prominent national advocacy group. American Oversight is committed to transparency and makes the responses agencies provide to public records 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.

Furthermore, this request is fundamentally made for non-commercial purposes. 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.⁶

³ La. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 44:32(C)(2).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Mark Ballard, *Jeff Landry Supports Texas Effort to Block Electoral Votes that Went to Joe Biden*, The Advocate, Dec. 9, 2020, https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/politics/elections/article_193de3e0-3a54-11eb-8036-07b9fff910f6.html; Tierney Sneed, *Read: The Template SCOTUS Election-Reversal Lawsuit that Trump Allies Pushed on LA's AG*, Talking Points Memo (June 18, 2021, 1:49 PM), <https://talkingpointsmemo.com/news/louisiana-attorney-general-election-reversal-lawsuit>.

⁶ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,650 page likes on Facebook and 106,600 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited July 16, 2021); American

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.⁷ Examples reflecting this commitment to the public disclosure of documents and the creation of editorial content include the posting of records and analysis related to the organization’s investigations into misconduct and corruption in state governments;⁸ posting records and analysis of federal and state governments’ responses to the Coronavirus pandemic;⁹ posting records received as part of American Oversight’s “Audit the Wall” project to gather and analyze information related to the Trump administration’s proposed construction of a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border, and analyses of what those records reveal;¹⁰ and 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.¹¹

Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited July 16, 2021).

⁷ See generally *News*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/blog>.

⁸ See generally *State Investigations*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/states>; see, e.g., *State Government Contacts with Voting-Restriction Activists*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/state-government-contacts-with-voting-restriction-activists>; *Georgia’s Voting Machines and Election Security*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/georgias-voting-machines-and-election-security>.

⁹ See, e.g., *The Trump Administration’s Response to Coronavirus*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/the-trump-administrations-response-to-coronavirus>; *Tulsa Health Officials Initially Estimated Trump Rally Would Directly Lead to 2 to 9 Deaths*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/tulsa-health-officials-initially-estimated-trump-rally-would-directly-lead-to-2-to-9-deaths>; *Wisconsin Documents Offer Window into Early Uncertainty over COVID-19*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/wisconsin-documents-offer-window-into-early-uncertainty-over-covid-19>; *In the Documents: Florida Health Department Efforts to Suppress Release of Coronavirus Records*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/in-the-documents-florida-health-department-efforts-to-suppress-release-of-coronavirus-records>.

¹⁰ 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>.

¹¹ *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>.

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:

- 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 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. Public business communications conducted on private email accounts and devices are public records subject to the Public Records Law.¹²
- 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 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

¹² La. Atty. Gen. Op. No. 01-155.

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, have any questions, or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records, please contact Khahilia Shaw at records@americanoversight.org or (202) 539-6507.

Sincerely,

/s/ Khahilia Shaw
Khahilia Shaw
on behalf of
American Oversight