



June 29, 2021

VIA EMAIL

Missouri Attorney General's Office
Supreme Court Building
207 West High Street
Jefferson City, MO 65102
sunshinerequest@ago.mo.gov

Re: Sunshine Law Request

Dear Custodian of Records:

Pursuant to the Missouri Sunshine Law, Mo. Rev. Stat. §§ 610.010 et seq., American Oversight makes the following request for records.

Press reported that the Republican Attorneys General Association (RAGA) and its affiliate, the Rule of Law Defense Fund (RLDF) covered more than \$21,400 for travel and lodging costs for Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt in 2020.¹

American Oversight seeks records with the potential to shed further light on the travel undertaken by Attorney General Schmitt and paid for by RAGA and RLDF.

Requested Records

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

1. All itineraries or agendas for Attorney General Eric Schmitt traveling on any of the trips specified below, including a list of individuals accompanying Attorney General Schmitt on the trips.
2. All email communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, calendar invitations, and calendar invitation attachments) sent by Attorney General Schmitt, Schmitt's Chief of Staff, Schmitt's scheduler, any other staff traveling with Schmitt or anyone involved in the planning of the trips regarding any of the trips taken by Attorney General Schmitt identified below.

¹ Jack Suntrup, *Republican Groups Covered \$21,000 in Travel Costs for Missouri AG Eric Schmitt Last Year*, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, May 5, 2021, https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/republican-groups-covered-21-00-e2%80%a6-last-year/article_3ec4ce5d-f571-5adf-b390-1e3498cf3693.html.



Specified Trips²

- a. Trip to Washington, DC, on or around February 29, 2020 – March 2, 2020, to attend the RAGA Winter Meeting
- b. Trip to Sea Island, GA, on or around August 21–25, 2020, to attend RAGA Multi-Tiered Summer Event
- c. Trip to Washington, DC, on or around September 23, 2020
- d. Trip to Salt Lake City, UT, on or around October 6, 2020
- e. Trip to Orlando, FL, on or around November 9–11, 2020, to attend the RAGA Fall National Meeting
- f. Trip to Washington, DC, on or around November 30, 2020
- g. Trip to Atlanta, GA, on or around December 7, 2020
- h. Trip to Washington, DC, on or around December 9, 2020

For both parts of this request, please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020.

In an effort to accommodate your office and reduce the number of potentially responsive records to be processed and produced, American Oversight has limited part 2 of its request to emails sent by the officials listed above. To be clear, however, American Oversight still requests that complete email chains be produced, displaying both sent and received messages. This means, for example, that both Attorney General Schmitt's response to an email about one of the listed trips and the initial received message are responsive to this request and should be produced.

Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with Mo. Rev. Stat. § 610.026.1(1), American Oversight requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. Disclosure of the requested records is in the public interest because it 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 likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of [a] public governmental body.”³ The public has a significant interest in travel taken by Attorney General Schmitt paid for by RAGA and RLDF.⁴ Records with the potential to shed light on this matter would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the government, including what type of travel RAGA and RLDF have subsidized for a Missouri public official and the events in which the official has participated, which tie directly to his role as attorney general. 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

² For further identifying information, please see Suntrup, *supra* note 1.

³ Mo. Rev. Stat. § 610.026.1(1).

⁴ *See, e.g.*, Suntrup *supra* note 1.

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.⁵ 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

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

⁵ Mo. Rev. Stat. § 610.026.1(1).

⁶ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,700 page likes on Facebook and 106,200 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited June 16, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited June 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>.

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

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.
- 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.
- 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.¹² 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

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>.

¹² Mo. Rev. Stat. § 610.024.1.

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 Mehreen Rasheed at records@americanoversight.org or (202) 848-1320. 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/ Mehreen Rasheed
Mehreen Rasheed
on behalf of
American Oversight