



September 20, 2021

**VIA EMAIL**

Phalin Flowers  
Administrative Assistant  
Utah House of Representatives  
350 North State St., Ste. 350  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114  
[pflowers@le.utah.gov](mailto:pflowers@le.utah.gov)

**Re: Government Records and Access Management Act Request**

Dear Records Custodian:

Pursuant to the Utah Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA), Utah Code §§ 63G-2-101 et seq., American Oversight makes the following request for records.

**Requested Records**

American Oversight requests that your office produce the following records within ten business days:

1. Records reflecting the expenses and costs incurred by the Utah House of Representatives related to Representatives Steve Christiansen and Phil Lyman's trip to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on or around August 10-12, 2021.<sup>1</sup>

To the extent your office has aggregated records sufficient to show all relevant expenses and costs, such as in spreadsheets, American Oversight would accept production of such records as sufficient. To the extent your office does not have an aggregated record of these costs, American Oversight requests records reflecting those costs, such as receipts, invoices, charge card or credit card statements, and reimbursement requests.

Relevant expenses may include, but are not limited to, hotel or other lodging costs; costs for air travel, rental car, or other transportation companies; costs incurred for government transportation; the cost of meals or refreshments; and per diem payments.

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<sup>1</sup> See Bryan Schott, *Two Utah Lawmakers Attended Conspiracy-Fueled Cyber Symposium Hosted by My Pillow's Mike Lindell*, Salt Lake Trib. (Aug. 13, 2021, 8:43 AM), <https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2021/08/13/rundown-two-utah/>.



Relevant expenses include costs associated with the travel of Representative Christiansen and Representative Lyman, and of any staff members, family members, or other individuals travelling with them.

2. All email communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, and calendar invitations) and text messages or messages on messaging platforms (such as Slack, GChat or Google Hangouts, Lync, Skype, Twitter direct messages, Facebook messages, WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, or Parler) sent or received by Representative Christiansen, Representative Lyman, or anyone communicating on their behalf such as a chief of staff, scheduler, or assistant, regarding their trip to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on or about August 10-12, 2021, or about Mike Lindell's Cyber Symposium.<sup>2</sup>

For parts 1 and 2 of this request, please provide all responsive records from August 1, 2021, through August 23, 2021.

3. All email communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, and calendar invitations) sent by Representative Christiansen or Representative Lyman from August 10-12, 2021.

In an effort to accommodate the House of Representatives and reduce the number of potentially responsive records to be processed and produced, American Oversight has limited part 3 of its request to emails sent by Representatives Christiansen or Lyman. 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 Christiansen's response to an email during the trip and the initial received message are responsive to this request and should be produced.

### **Fee Waiver Request**

In accordance with Utah Code § 63G-2-203(4)(a), American Oversight requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. Disclosure of the requested information will primarily benefit the public rather than a person, because the requested records 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 primarily benefits the public rather than a person.<sup>3</sup> The public has a significant interest in Representatives Christiansen and Lyman's trip to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, to attend an event purportedly related to election security.<sup>4</sup> Records with the potential to shed light on this matter would contribute significantly to public

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<sup>2</sup> For further identifying information, please see *id.*

<sup>3</sup> Utah Code § 63G-2-203(4)(a).

<sup>4</sup> See Schott, *supra* note 1.

understanding of operations of the government, including the potential cost to taxpayers of this trip. 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 not for American Oversight's personal or financial interest. As described above, this request is primarily and fundamentally made for the purpose of educating the public and is not made for any 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.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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;<sup>7</sup> posting records and analysis of federal and state governments' responses to the Coronavirus pandemic;<sup>8</sup> posting records received as part of American

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<sup>5</sup> American Oversight currently has approximately 15,700 page likes on Facebook and 108,100 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Sep. 9, 2021); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Sep. 9, 2021).

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

<sup>7</sup> 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>.

<sup>8</sup> 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*

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;<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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. If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically why it is not reasonable to segregate portions of the record for release.

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*Release of Coronavirus Records*, American Oversight, <https://www.americanoversight.org/in-the-documents-florida-health-department-efforts-to-suppress-release-of-coronavirus-records>.

<sup>9</sup> 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>.

<sup>10</sup> *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>.

- 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 Emma Lewis at [records@americanoversight.org](mailto: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