



May 4, 2022

VIA EMAIL

Florida Department of State
Office of the General Counsel
500 S. Bronough Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399
DOS.GeneralCounsel@DOS.MyFlorida.com

Re: Public Records Request

Dear Public Records Officer:

Pursuant to Article I, section 24(a), of the Florida Constitution, and Florida's public records laws, as codified at Fla. Stat. Chapter 119, American Oversight makes the following request for records.

Requested Records

American Oversight requests that your office promptly produce the following:

1. All calendars, calendar entries, meeting invites, or other similar scheduling records for (a) Secretary of State Laurel Lee, and (b) anyone serving in the position of Chief of Staff, reflecting or otherwise relating to meetings with Defend Florida.

This request includes, but is not limited to, meetings with Defend Florida co-founders Caroline Wetherington or Raj Doraisamy, or any other employees, members, representatives, or agents of Defend Florida.

Defend Florida has stated that the group secured a meeting with Secretary of State Laurel Lee.¹ Therefore, at a minimum, American Oversight expects responsive records to reflect that meeting.

Please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2021, through the date the search is conducted.

¹ See Zac Anderson, *Voting Fraud Conspiracy Group Has Pipeline to Florida Governor as Election Changes Considered*, Sarasota Herald Tribune, Feb. 6, 2022, <https://www.heraldtribune.com/story/news/politics/2022/02/06/defend-florida-lobbying-legislature-and-ron-desantis-voting-restrictions-conservative-group-gop/9244145002/>.



American Oversight requests that the calendars be produced in a format that includes all invitees, any notes, and all attachments. Please do not limit your search to Outlook calendars; we request the production of any calendar—paper or electronic, whether on government-issued or personal devices—used to track or coordinate how the governor and his chief of staff allocate their time on agency business.

The search should include any calendars associated with these officials' individual email accounts, as well as any official calendars maintained for them, including by any administrative assistant or scheduler.

2. All records reflecting communications between (a) the Department of State officials listed below, and (b) Defend Florida, including, but not limited to, by co-founders Caroline Wetherington or Raj Doraisamy, or any other employees, members, representatives, or agents of Defend Florida (including, but not limited to, by anyone communicating from an email address ending in @defendflorida.org or @defendourunion.org).

Records responsive to this request include, but are not limited to, the following types of records: emails; email attachments; text messages; messages on messaging platforms (such as Slack, GChat or Google Hangouts, Lync, Skype, or WhatsApp); telephone call logs or any other records reflecting telephone calls made, received, or transferred to or by the Governor's Office; visitor logs; calendar invitations; calendar entries; meeting notices; meeting agendas; informational material; draft legislation; talking points; any handwritten or electronic notes taken during any oral communications; summaries of any oral communications; or any other materials reflecting such communications as requested.

Department of State Officials

- a) Secretary of State Laurel Lee
- b) Anyone serving in the position of Chief of Staff
- c) General Counsel Bradley McVay
- d) Division of Elections Director Maria Matthews
- e) Deputy General Counsel, Ashley Davis

Please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2021, through the date the search is conducted.

Please notify American Oversight of any anticipated fees or costs in excess of \$100 prior to incurring such costs or fee.

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.**

Please search all locations and systems likely to have responsive 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 or texts conducting government business sent or received on the personal account of the government official constitutes a record for purposes of Florida's public records laws.²

In addition, American Oversight insists that your agency 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; your office 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 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 agency 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.

² *Cf. State v. City of Clearwater*, 863 So. 2d 149, 154 (Fla. 2003) (“The determining factor is the nature of the record, not its physical location.”).

Conclusion

American Oversight is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with the mission 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.³

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 Taylor Stoneman at records@americanoversight.org or (202) 848-1319.

Sincerely,

/s/ Taylor Stoneman
Taylor Stoneman
on behalf of
American Oversight

³ American Oversight currently has approximately 15,720 page likes on Facebook and 117,200 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited May 3, 2022); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited May 3, 2022).