



May 31, 2024

VIA EMAIL

Florida Department of State
Office of the General Counsel
Attn: Public Records Custodian
500 S. Bronough Street Suite 100
Tallahassee, FL 32399
PublicRecords@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. Any handouts, presentation materials, summaries, or notes (electronic or handwritten) or other documents provided to or created by Secretary of State Cord Byrd or anyone working on Secretary Byrd's behalf (such as a chief of staff, assistant, or counsel) as part of or in relation to the February 5-6, 2024 Heritage Foundation "Secretaries of State Conference" hosted by the Honest Elections Project, Public Interest Legal Foundation, and Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C.¹
2. All email communications (including emails, complete email chains, calendar invitations, or attachments thereto) between (a) the officials listed below and (b) any of the external entities listed below.

Florida Department of State Officials:

- a. Secretary of State Cord Byrd, or anyone communicating on his behalf, such as an assistant, scheduler, or aide
- b. Jennifer Kennedy, Assistant Secretary and Chief of Staff
- c. Joseph Van de Bogart, General Counsel
- d. Mark Ard, External Affairs Director

¹ See, e.g., David Armiak, *Heritage Foundation Secretaries of State Conference Agenda*, Feb. 5-6, 2024, Center for Media and Democracy, April 5, 2024, <https://www.exposedbycmd.org/featured-documents/heritage-foundation-secretaries-of-state-conference-agenda-feb-5-6-2024/>.



- e. Andrew Darlington, Director of the Office of Election Crimes and Security

External Entities:

- i. Any email address ending in heritage.org
- ii. Any email address ending in heritageaction.com
- iii. Any email address ending in honestelections.org
- iv. Any email address ending in electionlawcenter.com
- v. Any email address ending in publicinterestlegal.org
- vi. Any email address ending in alec.org
- vii. Any email address ending in jasonsnead.com

Please note that American Oversight does not seek, and that part 2 of this request specifically excludes, the initial mailing of news clips or other mass-distribution emails. However, subsequent communications responding to or forwarding such emails are responsive to this request. For example, if an official received a mass-distribution news clip email from an email ending in heritage.org, that initial email would not be responsive to this request. However, if the official forwarded that email to another listed individual with their own commentary, that subsequent message would be responsive to this request and should be produced.

- 3. All email communications (including emails, complete email chains, calendar invitations, and attachments thereto) sent by the officials listed above in part 2 and containing the key terms listed below.

Key Terms:

- 1. HEP
- 2. PILF
- 3. “Honest Elections”
- 4. “Public Interest Legal Foundation”
- 5. Snead
- 6. Spakovsky
- 7. “Secretaries of State Conference”

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 3 of this request to emails sent by the specified individuals. To be clear, however, American Oversight still requests that complete email chains be produced, displaying both sent and received messages. This means that both an individual’s response to an email and the initial received message are responsive to this request and should be produced.

- 4. All text messages or messages on messaging platforms (such as Slack, GChat or Google Hangouts, Lync, Skype, X direct messages, Facebook messages, WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, or Parler) pertaining to official agency business exchanged between

(a) Secretary of State Cord Byrd, Assistant Secretary Jennifer Kennedy, or External Affairs Director Mark Ard, and (b) the external individuals listed below.

External Individuals:

- i. John Christian Adams, also known as J. Adams or J. Christian Adams
- ii. Jason Snead
- iii. Hans von Spakovsky
- iv. Cleta Mitchell
- v. Katie Samalis, also known as Katie Samalis-Aldrich

For all parts of this request, please provide all responsive records from January 1, 2024, through April 1, 2024.

In the case of emails and texts, the search should include those sent or received from the specified officials' personal accounts and/or devices if they were used to conduct official business, as well as those sent from their official email addresses or government-issued devices.

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 constitute records 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.**

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.").

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.

Section 119.12 Notice

This document provides written notice identifying American Oversight's public records request to your agency's custodian of public records in compliance with Section 119.12(1)(b) of the Florida Statutes. Should your agency fail to comply with its obligations under Florida's public records laws, American Oversight may be prepared to file suit to enforce the provisions of Fla. Stat. Chapter 119.

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.com.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 16,000 followers on Facebook and 111,400 followers on Twitter.com. American Oversight, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited May 29, 2024); American Oversight (@weareoversight), Twitter.com, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited May 29, 2024).