AMERICAN OVERSIGHT

April 10, 2026

**VIA EMAIL**

South Carolina Election Commission
Attn: FOIA
P.O. Box 5987
Columbia, SC 29250
FOIA@elections.sc.gov

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request**

Dear Freedom of Information Officer:

Pursuant to the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, S.C. Code Ann. §§ 30-4-10 et seq., American Oversight makes the following request for records.

**Requested Records**

American Oversight requests that your office promptly produce the following records:[1]

1. All email communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, calendar invitations, and calendar invitation attachments) between any of the officials listed below, and any of the external entities or individuals listed below (including the listed email addresses and/or domains).

   South Carolina Election Commission Officials:
   i. Jenny Wooten, Interim Executive Director
   ii. Howard Knapp, former Executive Director
   iii. Paige Salonich, former Deputy Executive Director

   External Entities and Individuals:
   a. John "Rick" Richards (drr@cathaid.com, drr@EagleAI.pro, drronline@me.com, drr@theelectorlist.com)
   b. John Richards (johnrichards@EagleAI.pro, john.richards@psephos.us)
   c. EagleAI NETwork (EagleAI.pro)
   d. ELLY (theelectorlist.com)
   e. Psephos (psephos.us)

[1] Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann. § 30-4-30(C), please notify American Oversight of your final determination as to the public availability of the requested records within ten business days and produce the records within thirty calendar days after issuing your final determination.

2. All text messages (including complete text message threads or conversations) and messages on messaging platforms (such as Signal, Slack, GChat or Google Hangouts, Lync, Skype, X (formerly Twitter) direct messages, Facebook messages, Microsoft Teams messages, WhatsApp, Telegram, Parler, Mattermost, Wickr, TeleMessage, TM SGNL or any app that can interface with an app such as those listed or otherwise borrow its technology) between any of the officials listed above in part 1, and John "Rick" Richards.

   American Oversight requests that all images, videos, audio recordings, or other attachments regarding official government business shared via text message and/or messaging platforms be produced in response to this request. To the extent any hyperlinks and/or URLs were shared via text message and/or messaging platforms, American Oversight requests records in a form that display the full URL.

   American Oversight is not in a position to provide a phone number for the listed individuals. If the listed officials are unable to provide them, please use the individuals' names as search terms. For example, a search for text messages between an official and John "Rick" Richards would be conducted by searching the official's text messages using the key terms "John," "Rick," and "Richards" to identify potentially responsive records.

**For both parts of this request, please provide all responsive records from June 1, 2025, through the date the search is conducted.**

**Fee Waiver Request**

In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 30-4-30(B), 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. In addition, this request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.

A waiver of fees is "in the public interest because furnishing the information can be considered as primarily benefiting the general public."[2] The general public has a significant interest in understanding the use of third-party software to clean voter rolls.[3] Records with the potential to shed light on this matter would contribute significantly to public understanding of operations of the government, including whether South Carolina state election officials are or have considered using ELLY, Psephos, or EagleAI programs to clean voter rolls.. American Oversight is committed

[2] S.C. Code Ann. § 30-4-30(B).
[3] *See, e.g.*, Lynn Bonner, *Conservative Activists Want to Use Software with Controversial Origins to Check NC's Voter Rolls*, NC Newsline (Feb. 13, 2026, 6:01 AM), https://ncnewsline.com/2026/02/13/conservative-activists-want-to-use-software-with-controversial-origins-to-check-ncs-voter-rolls/.

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, American Oversight's work is aimed solely at serving the public interest. 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 X (formerly Twitter).[4]

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.[5] Examples reflecting this commitment include the posting of records related to the first Trump Administration's contacts with Ukraine and analyses of those contacts;[6] posting records and editorial content about the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic;[7] posting records received as part of American Oversight's "Audit the Wall" project to gather and analyze information related to the first Trump administration's proposed construction of a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border, and analyses of what those records reveal;[8] 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

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[4] American Oversight currently has approximately 16,000 followers on Facebook and 94,700 followers on X (formerly Twitter). American Oversight, Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/ (last visited Apr. 7, 2026); American Oversight (@weareoversight), X (formerly Twitter), https://x.com/weareoversight (last visited Apr. 7, 2026).

[5] *See generally Our Latest*, American Oversight, https://www.americanoversight.org/blog.

[6] *The Trump Administration's Contacts with Ukraine*, American Oversight, https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/the-trump-administrations-contacts-with-ukraine.

[7] *See generally The Trump Administration's Response to Coronavirus*, American Oversight, https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/the-trump-administrations-response-to-coronavirus; *see, e.g., CDC Calendars from 2018 and 2019: Pandemic-Related Briefings and Meetings*, American Oversight, https://www.americanoversight.org/cdc-calendars-from-2018-and-2019-pandemic-related-briefings-and-meetings.

[8] *See generally Audit the Wall*, American Oversight, https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/audit-the-wall; *see, e.g., Audit the Wall: No Plans, No Funding, No Timeline, No Wall*, American Oversight, https://americanoversight.org/audit-the-wall-no-plans-funding-or-timeline-and-no-wall/.

process for issuing such waivers;[9] and posting records and analysis of federal officials' use of taxpayer dollars to charter private aircraft or use government planes for unofficial business.[10]

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 X (formerly 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.

- 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.

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[9] *DOJ Records Relating to Solicitor General Noel Francisco's Recusal*, American Oversight, https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/25544090-doj-records-relating-to-solicitor-general-noel-franciscos-recusal-american-oversight; *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.

[10] *See generally Swamp Airlines: Chartered Jets at Taxpayer Expense*, American Oversight, https://www.americanoversight.org/investigation/swamp-airlines-private-jets-taxpayer-expense; *see, e.g.*, *New Information on Pompeo's 2017 Trips to His Home State*, American Oversight, https://www.americanoversight.org/new-information-on-pompeos-2017-trips-to-his-home-state.

- 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.[11] 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 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 Ben Sparks at records@americanoversight.org or (202) 897-3915.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Ben Sparks*
Ben Sparks
on behalf of
American Oversight

[11] S.C. Code Ann. § 30-4-40(b).