

January 27, 2026

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Social Security Administration
Office of Privacy and Disclosure
G-401 WHR 6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21235
Via online portal

Re: Freedom of Information Action Request

Dear FOIA Officer:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. §§ 552, Democracy Forward Foundation submits this request for records.

Records Requested

Democracy Forward Foundation (“DFF”) requests that the Social Security Administration (“SSA”) produce the following within twenty (20) business days:

All electronic communications (including emails, email attachments, complete email chains, calendar invitations, or attachments thereto, as well as any text messages or messages sent on messaging platforms such as Slack, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Signal, or GChat) between (A) any SSA officials listed below and the following (B) external groups and individuals.

A. SSA Officials:

- a. Antonio Gracias
- b. Payton Rehling
- c. Jon Koval
- d. Any other members of the SSA Department of Government Efficiency (“DOGE”) team¹

¹ SSA officials who have recently conducted a review of SSA DOGE team communications can identify additional individuals with a reasonable amount of effort. See Defendant’s Notice of Corrections to the Record, *American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees v. Social Security Administration*, No. 1:25-cv-00596, Dkt. No. 197 (D. Md. filed Jan. 16, 2026). <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.mdd.577321/gov.uscourts.mdd.577321.197.0.pdf>. The search should include the 11 individuals referenced in Dkt. No. 116 and presumably identified in Dkt. No. 118.

- B. External groups and individuals:
- a. We the People USA Alliance (including, but not limited to [@wtpalliance.org](https://www.wtpalliance.org))
 - b. Election Integrity Network (“EIN”) (including, but not limited to [@whoscounting.us](https://whoscounting.us); [@electionintegritynetwork.org](https://electionintegritynetwork.org), [@electionintegrity.network](https://electionintegrity.network))
 - c. Cleta Mitchell, Chair of EIN (including, but not limited to [@cletamitchell.com](https://cletamitchell.com), [@conservativepartnership.org](https://conservativepartnership.org))
 - d. Citizen Election Research Center (“CERC”) (including, but not limited to [@citizeselectionresearchcenter.org](https://citizeselectionresearchcenter.org))
 - e. EagleAI Network (eagleai.pro)
 - f. Virginia Institute for Public Policy (including, but not limited to virginiainstitute.org)
 - g. Only Citizens Vote Coalition ([@onlycitizensvotecoalition.com](https://onlycitizensvotecoalition.com))
 - h. Sharon P. Bemis, President of EIN
 - i. Kerri Toloczko, EIN
 - j. Sara Vieira, EIN
 - k. Kathy Harms, EIN
 - l. Ned Jones, EIN
 - m. Julie Adams, Georgia Election Integrity Network
 - n. North Carolina Election Integrity Team ([@nceit.org](https://nceit.org))
 - o. Patrice Johnson, Michigan Election Integrity Network

This request seeks records from January 20, 2025 until the date of the search.

Scope of Search

FOIA requires agencies to disclose information, with only limited exceptions. 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(8)(A). In the event that any of the requested documents cannot be disclosed in their entirety, we request that you release any material that can be reasonably segregated. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(b). Should any documents or portions of documents be withheld, we further request that you state with specificity the description of the document to be withheld and the legal and factual grounds for withholding any documents or portions thereof in an index, as required by *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973). Should any document include both disclosable and non-disclosable material that cannot reasonably be segregated, we request that you describe what proportion of the information in a document is non-disclosable and how that information is dispersed throughout the document. *Mead Data Cent., Inc. v. U.S. Dep’t of Air Force*, 566 F.2d 242, 261 (D.C. Cir. 1977).

If requested records are located in, or originated in, another agency, department, office

installation or bureau, please refer this request or any relevant portion of this request to the appropriate entity.

To the extent that the records are readily reproducible in an electronic format, we would prefer to receive the records in that format. However, if certain records are not available in that format, we are willing to accept the best available copy of each such record.

Please respond to this request in writing within 20 working days as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(A)(i). If all of the requested documents are not available within that time period, we request that you provide us with all requested documents or portions of documents that are available within that time period.

Request for Fee Waiver

Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1306 and your agency's regulations, DFF requests a waiver of all fees associated with processing records for this request. Your regulations provide for documents to be furnished to requesters at no fee or reduced fees when "disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester." 20 C.F.R. § 402.85.

When assessing a request for a fee waiver, your agency considers the following factors: (i) how the records pertain to the Federal government's operations or activities; (ii) whether disclosure would reveal any meaningful information about government operations or activities not already known to the public; and (iii) whether the contribution to public understanding would be significant. *Id.* § 402.85(2). Considering these factors, DFF's request merits a fee waiver.

(i) The requested records pertain to the Federal government's operations and activities because they concern the potential, noncompliant distribution of personal data stored at SSA to an outside, unauthorized political advocacy group. On January 16, 2026, SSA submitted a correction to the record² for the ongoing case, *American Federation of State v. Social Security Administration*, No. 1:2025cv00596, stating that a recent internal review revealed that two members of SSA's DOGE team had communicated with and sent a Voter Data Agreement to an external political advocacy group. Email communications suggested that the group intended to "overturn election results in certain states" by matching their voter rolls with SSA data.

(ii) Disclosure of the requested records would reveal meaningful information about

² Defendant's Notice of Corrections to the Record, *American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees v. Social Security Administration*, No. 1:25-cv-00596, Dkt. No. 197 (D. Md. filed Jan. 16, 2026).
<https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.mdd.577321/gov.uscourts.mdd.577321.197.0.pdf>

government operations not already known to the public because it is yet unclear whether the employees had accessed SSA data to match voter rolls and if data was indeed shared externally. Therefore, the disclosure of the requested records, which are directly related to this issue and not attenuated connections, is necessary to shed light on these events. Given the gravity and sensitivity of sharing private data, the public has the right to view these documents to understand how the government has handled their data.

(iii) The contribution to public understanding would be significant because the purported activity raises serious issues of government integrity. First, the collaboration between government officials with a political advocacy group poses violations of the Hatch Act. Second, these actions potentially constitute breaches to Americans' sensitive data, including, but not limited to bank accounts, credit cards, loans, benefits, and personal identification. Third, the possibility that SSA officials had taken these actions while the agency was under court order at the time to refrain from such activities is a serious infraction of the government's integrity and risks weakening the public's trust in their own government.

DFF intends to publicize records DFF receives to contribute significantly to the public's understanding of how this Administration is handling their sensitive data.

To this latter point, DFF has a demonstrated ability to disseminate information of public interest requested through FOIA. When DFF obtains materials through FOIA requests that are of significant public interest, DFF's communications staff regularly works to ensure that these materials and their contents are featured in press articles educating the public about the operation of government; many articles feature additional commentary and analysis from DFF staff about those materials and their relevance to policy issues of public interest. Indeed, records received by DFF have previously formed the basis of news reports.³

³ See, e.g., Alexander Nazaryan, *Why did right-wing troll Charles C. Johnson meet with Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross?*, Yahoo News (May 14, 2019), <https://news.yahoo.com/why-did-rightwing-troll-charles-c-johnson-want-to-meet-with-commerce-secretary-wilbur-ross-090000636.html>; Derek Kravitz and Jack Gillum, *"Happy to Do It": Emails Show Current FAA Chief Coordinated With Ex-Lobbyist Colleagues on Policy*, ProPublica (Mar. 27, 2019), <https://www.propublica.org/article/dan-elwell-current-faa-chief-coordinated-with-ex-lobbyist-colleagues-on-policy>;

Hamid Aleaziz, *Emails Show US Border Officials Didn't Receive "Zero Tolerance" Guidance Until After the Policy Was Enacted*, BuzzFeed News (Feb. 28, 2019), <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hamedaleaziz/zero-tolerance-policy-guidance-dhs-family-separation>; Jonathan Cohn and Jeffrey Young, *Emails Show Trump Administration Was Told Obamacare Ad Cuts Could Hurt Enrollment*, Huffpost (Dec. 17, 2018), https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-verma-obamacare-advertising-cut_us_5c115061e4b084b082ff8dba; Madison Pauly, *When the Biggest Prison Company Complained About a California Sanctuary Law, ICE Listened*, Mother Jones (Dec. 7, 2018), <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2018/12/geo-memo-private-prison-california-immigration/>; Eliza Rellman, *'Just answer the question and kill this story': In internal emails, Heather Nauert criticized Rex Tillerson's refusal to deny reports that he called Trump a 'moron,'* Business Insider (Nov. 2, 2018), <https://www.businessinsider.com/heather-nauert-rex-tillerson-trump-moron-2018-11>; Rebecca Klein, *Lawsuit Accuses Betsy DeVos And Her Deputies Of Being Motivated By Sexism*, HuffPost (Oct. 31, 2018), https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/us_5bd9ff6ee4b01abe6a1ad4a9; Nick Penzenstadler, *A year after Vegas shooting, ATF emails reveal blame, alarm over bump stocks*, USA Today (Oct. 1, 2018),

Democracy Forward Foundation is not filing this request to further any commercial interest, and any information obtained by Democracy Forward Foundation as a result of this request and disclosed will be disclosed at no cost.

If the request for a waiver is denied, we are willing to pay all reasonable fees incurred for searching and duplicating records in responding to this request, up to \$100. If the costs of responding to this request should exceed that amount, please contact us before incurring costs exceeding that amount.

Conclusion

If you need clarification as to the scope of the request, have any questions, or foresee any obstacles to releasing fully the requested records within 20 business days, please contact me as soon as possible at foia@democracyforward.org.

We appreciate your assistance and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

/s/ Skye Perryman

Skye Perryman

President & CEO

Democracy Forward Foundation

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<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/10/01/year-after-vegas-shooting-atf-emails-reveal-blame-alarm-over-bump-stocks/1432137002/>; Jessica Kwong, *Ivanka Trump was more than complicit in Obama equal pay rollback she had a hand in it, watchdog alleges*, Newsweek (Aug. 29, 2018), <https://www.newsweek.com/ivanka-trump-equal-pay-complicit-obama-1093833>; Vera Bergengruen, *New Emails Show What Happens When The Pentagon Has To Scramble To Catch Up To Trump*, BuzzFeed News (July 25, 2018), <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/verabergengruen/these-emails-show-what-happens-when-the-white-house-keeps>; Erin Dooley, *Exclusive: Former for-profit college executive shaped Education Department policy that could benefit former employers: Documents*, ABC News (May 15, 2017), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/exclusive-profit-college-executive-shaped-education-department-policy/story?id=55108981>; Heidi Przybyla, *Notes, emails reveal Trump appointees' war to end HHS teen pregnancy program*, NBC News (Mar. 20, 2018), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/notes-emails-reveal-trump-appointees-war-end-hhs-teen-pregnancy-n857686>; Dominic Holden, *Documents Show The Trump Administration Approved Bump Stocks Before It Opposed Them*, BuzzFeed News (Mar. 22, 2018), <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/dominicholden/trump-administration-bump-stocks>; Bernard Condon, *Trump Advisor Denies He Cheered End of Tunnel Funding Deal*, Associated Press (Feb. 13, 2018), available at <https://www.usnews.com/news/business/articles/2018-02-13/trump-adviser-denies-he-cheered-end-of-tunnel-funding-deal>; Celeste Katz, *Interior Department tapped wildfire preparedness funds for Ryan Zinke helicopter tour*, Newsweek (Dec. 29, 2017), <https://www.newsweek.com/ryan-zinke-interior-department-helicopters-wildfires-757857>.