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FOIA Officer
Office of the Secretary
US Department of the Interior
Submitted via webform at <https://www.doi.gov/foia/contact-us>

May 9, 2017

FOIA REQUEST

Dear Records Request Officer:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, I request access to and copies of all correspondence held by the Department of the Interior that was sent by or received from the Office of Senator Rob Portman, including correspondence from staff members, at any point since January 20, 2017.

Additionally, I request access to and copies of call logs and calendar entries from the Office of Legislative Affairs or the Office of the Secretary showing correspondence or meetings with Senator Portman or members of his staff during this time-period.

This should specifically include all correspondence with, calendar entries involving, and call logs noting correspondence with Patrick Orth, a Legislative Assistant in Senator Portman's Office since January of 2016 and former lobbyist for America's Natural Gas Alliance.¹

Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) and 43 C.F.R. § 2.45, Western Values Project requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. The subject of this request concerns the operations of the federal government, and the disclosures will likely contribute to a better understanding of relevant government procedures by the public in a significant way. Moreover, the request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes. 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).²

¹ Lobbying Report for America's Natural Gas Alliance, 2015 (Q1)

² See, e.g., *McClellan Ecological Seepage Situation v. Carlucci*, 835 F.2d 1282, 1285 (9th Cir. 1987).

Western Values Project requests a waiver of fees because disclosure of the requested information is “in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding” of government operations and is not “primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.”³ The disclosure of the information sought under this request will document and reveal the operations of the federal government, including how public funds are spent and how officials conduct the public’s business.

This request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes. As a project of a 501(c)(3) organization, Western Values Project does not have a commercial purpose and the release of the information requested is not in Western Values Project’s financial interest. Western Values Project’s mission is to give a voice to Western values in the national conversation about resource development and public lands conservation, a space too often dominated by industry lobbyists and their government allies. Western Values Project will use the information gathered, and its analysis of it, to educate the public through reports, press releases, or other media. Western Values Project will also make materials it gathers available on our public website <http://www.westernvaluesproject.org/>.

Accordingly, Western Values Project qualifies for a fee waiver.

Application for Expedited Processing

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(E)(1) and 43 C.F.R. § 2.20(a)(2)(iii) Western Values Project requests the expedited processing of this request.

I certify to be true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, that there is widespread and exceptional media interest and there exist possible questions concerning the government’s integrity, which affect public confidence. Senator Portman’s support for repealing the Interior Department’s Methane and Waste Prevention Rule waste was only announced on May 8, 2017.⁴

There is substantial public interest among the Senator’s constituents and the general public regarding the decision-making process that led to Senator Portman’s decision, specifically considering the fact that one of his staff members – Mr. Patrick Orth – lobbied on the rule as recently as 2015.

Additionally, an effort to repeal the Methane and Waste Prevention Rule is scheduled for a vote in Congress as soon as May 10, 2017.⁵ The availability of documents concerning Senator Portman and his staff’s discussion of the Methane and Waste Prevention rule with the Department, and the public’s ability to make their voice heard regarding those

³ 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii); 43 C.F.R. § 2.45(a)(2).

⁴Kellie Linney, “Methane Rule vote likely tomorrow; Portman to vote ‘yes,’” *E&E Daily*, 05/09/17

⁵ Ibid.

records in advance of a vote on the issue or any further action, is a quintessential example of “information that has particular value that will be lost if not disseminated quickly.”⁶

Western Values Project intends to release these records to the public and provide important context on our website www.westernvaluesproject.org and to our social media audience.

Accordingly, Western Values Project’s request satisfies the criteria for expedition.

Conclusion

If possible, I would prefer to receive this information electronically via e-mail at csaeger@westernvaluesproject.org.

If you have questions or need additional information from me, please feel free to call me at 406-438-1918.

If my request is denied in whole or part, I ask that you justify all deletions by reference to specific exemptions of the act.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Chris Saeger
Executive Director
Western Values Project

⁶ 43 C.F.R. § 2.20(a)(2)(iii).