



October 3, 2024

Via email and webform

Tiffany Reed
Open Records Coordinator
Oklahoma State Department of Education
2500 N. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK 73105
Tiffany.reed@sde.ok.gov; sde.orr@sde.ok.gov

Re: Open Records Act request concerning \$3 million in spending on provision of Bibles

Dear Ms. Reed:

On behalf of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma Foundation, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, and the Oklahoma members of the foregoing organizations, and pursuant to the Oklahoma Open Records Act, 51 O.S. §§ 24A.5, 24A.10, we request the documents described below. Under 51 O.S. § 24A.10(A), “[a]ny information, records or other material heretofore voluntarily supplied to any state agency, board or commission shall be subject to full disclosure pursuant to” the Act.

We are aware that, during its September 26, 2024 meeting, the Oklahoma State Board of Education approved a \$3 million budget request for Fiscal Year 2026 “to provide Bibles to the Oklahoma classrooms.” During the September 26 Board meeting, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters stated that this “three-million-dollar ask . . . would be in conjunction with the three million dollars that we’re putting forth currently to provide Bibles in the classroom. So this would give us the ability to utilize six million dollars in less than two years to ensure that the Bible hasn’t been driven out of Oklahoma classrooms”

We therefore request all records¹ relating to “the three million dollars that [the Oklahoma State Department of Education is] putting forth currently to provide Bibles in the classroom,” including but not limited to:

1. All records of expenditures during Fiscal Year 2025 (the fiscal year that started on July 1, 2024, and will end on June 30, 2025) related to the provision of Bibles for Oklahoma public-school classrooms, including invoices, receipts, and payment records.
2. All records describing or referencing planned expenditures during Fiscal Year 2025 related to the provision of Bibles for Oklahoma public-school classrooms.
3. All agreements and contracts with suppliers of Bibles related to the provision of Bibles for Oklahoma public-school classrooms.
4. All requests for proposals for the provision of Bibles for Oklahoma public-school classrooms.
5. All communications, from or to any person, relating to spending of state funds during Fiscal Year 2025 on the provision of Bibles for Oklahoma public-school classrooms.
6. All records documenting or describing the source(s) of all state funds that have been or will be spent during Fiscal Year 2025 on the provision of Bibles for Oklahoma public-school classrooms, including records setting forth function codes, object codes, or fund identifiers.
7. All records analyzing or discussing whether spending state funds during Fiscal Year 2025 on the provision of Bibles for Oklahoma public-school classrooms is legal.

¹ “Records” has the same meaning as in 51 O.S. § 24A.3(1): “Record’ means all documents including, but not limited to, any book, paper, photograph, microfilm, data files created by or used with computer software, computer tape, disk, record, sound recording, film recording, video record or other material regardless of physical form or characteristic, created by, received by, under the authority of, or coming into the custody, control or possession of public officials, public bodies or their representatives in connection with the transaction of public business, the expenditure of public funds or the administering of public property.”

8. All other records relating to “the three million dollars that [the Oklahoma State Department of Education is] putting forth currently to provide Bibles in the classroom.”

Instructions

For any records falling within the scope of this request that also contain confidential information or information otherwise outside the scope of required disclosure under the Oklahoma Open Records Act, we request that reasonably segregable portions be provided, as outlined in 51 O.S. § 24A.5(3). Should any part of this request be denied, we request a written response asserting the specific exemption or privilege that you believe allows the denial of each specific record withheld.

We would greatly appreciate it if you could provide the requested documents to us in electronic format by emailing them to us at *luchenitser@au.org* or via electronic file transfer. Alternatively, please make the documents available on electronic media for pickup at your office, or please send the documents on electronic media to us at:

Alex J. Luchenitser
Americans United for Separation of Church and State
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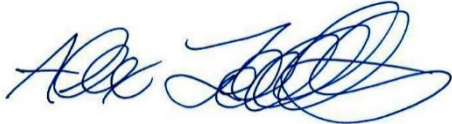
This request is made for noncommercial purposes. The request is made in the public interest, specifically so that members of Americans United who are Oklahoma taxpayers can determine whether those entrusted with the affairs of government are honestly, faithfully, and competently performing their duties as public servants with respect to the spending of state funds. In addition, Americans United functions as part of the news media, through its monthly magazine *Church & State*, and the information requested is also sought for use in that magazine. This request is therefore exempt from record-search fees under 51 O.S. § 24A.5(4) and OAC § 210:1-3-11(d)(1).

In light of the importance of this issue and Superintendent Walters’ statement that the three million dollars at issue are “currently” being spent, and per 51 O.S. § 24A.5(6), which requires you to provide “prompt, reasonable access” to public records, we ask that you provide the requested records by October 17, 2024.

We authorize you to charge—and we commit to paying—any duplication fees that you may lawfully charge for this request up to \$250. If the fees would exceed that amount, please contact me for authorization before incurring higher charges.

Thank you for your assistance, and please do not hesitate to call us at 202-466-7306 or 202-898-2134 or email us at *luchenitser@au.org* and *anderson@au.org* if you would like to discuss this request.

Very truly yours,



Alex J. Luchenitser
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*2024 law-school graduate. Not admitted to any bar. Application to the New York Bar pending. Supervised by Alex J. Luchenitser, a member of the D.C. Bar.

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