



OKLAHOMA STATE
DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

August 9th, 2024

Gentner Drummond
Attorney General – State of Oklahoma
313 NE 21st St.
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105
Via email and regular U.S. mail

Re: Correspondence regarding Open Records Requests dated July 16th, 2024.

Attorney General Drummond,

Greetings. I write in response to your claim of violations of the Oklahoma Open Records Act, codified at Title 51 O.S. § 24A.1, et seq.

I am aware of your publicly stated commitment “to increasing openness, accountability, and transparency in state government” as evidence by your creation of a Public Access Counselor in March 2023, staffed by former State Senator Anthony Sikes.

When I assumed office the Oklahoma State Department of Education (“OSDE”) had a woefully understaffed Open Records Requests (“ORR”) team with only one (1) employee dedicated to filling ORRs. I quickly realized the need to increase staffing to address the backlog. I have taken steps to build the ORR team and feel that we now have the staff needed to tackle the backlog.

My administration continually seeks to clear the inherited backlog and to address new requests as well. Unfortunately, the volume of requests received by the OSDE and the volume of responsive, or potentially responsive, documents is large. To attempt to resolve any delays I have approved the hiring of additional personnel to respond to ORR requests.

As indicated above, OSDE does employ designated persons authorized to release agency records in compliance with Title 51 O.S. § 24A.7. This now includes a designated attorney that was recently hired. Mr. Sikes, in your office was recently informed of this fact as well as the identity of the attorney. To my knowledge, since the date of your letter there have been several communications from Mr. Sikes to OSDE personnel regarding ORRs. Mr. Sikes’ communications were responded to promptly.

I must respectfully decline the invitation to meet at your office on August 9th, 2024. The date and time were unilaterally chosen by you without due consideration to the calendars and workloads of me or my staff. However, my staff has worked diligently on the matters you identified, and we seek to provide appropriate responses as soon as possible. I am willing to re-schedule a meeting with you at a mutually amenable time and date.



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In closing, rest assured that my agency and I are working diligently to clear all ORRs ...
not only those you reference from the media.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ryan Walters'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large 'R' and 'W'.

Ryan Walters
Superintendent of Public Instruction