

One Wisconsin Now: Brad Schimel swag update: Attorney General denies request to provide details on purchases of promotional material using public funds

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Whether It's Embarrassment or Ignorance AG Response to Open Records Request 'Completely Unacceptable'

MADISON, Wis. — Just how much has Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel spent on promotional swag like commemorative coins, golf towels and coffee mugs? Were these purchases made from the lowest bidder? Who approved them? Based on his office's response to an open records request from One Wisconsin Now, Schimel is either hiding the information, or he doesn't know how he's spending public dollars on promotional swag.

"Be it embarrassment or ignorance, Brad Schimel's response to our open records request is completely unacceptable," said Ross. "He's spending our money to buy things like commemorative coins, travel mugs and towels and he owes us a complete accounting of it."

The request submitted by One Wisconsin Now to Schimel's office in late May 2017 sought "... records in the possession of the Department of Justice related to pricing, design, purchases, invoices, and/or payment for all promotional items or 'swag'

(including but not limited to coins, coffee mugs or tumblers, stickers, bags, etc.)”
The request was for the time period covering Schimel’s tenure in office.

Nearly a month later in response to One Wisconsin Now’s request for detailed information about spending on promotional items, Schimel’s office denied the request as “insufficient.” In its response, the Department of Justice alleges it would be too hard to compile complete information about purchases presumably made with the knowledge of the Attorney General and at his direction.

The May request was a follow up to [an earlier request from One Wisconsin Now](#) that, after a long series of delays by Schimel’s Department of Justice, found taxpayers were socked with at least \$52,907 in promotional merchandise costs between July 2013 to June 2017. Items purchased on the taxpayer’s dime included “Pocket Notebooks,” “Backpacks” and “Travel Tumblers.”

Ross noted that, while finding the time and money to use his office to promote himself, Schimel has failed as head of the Department of Justice to use the office to fight for the best interests of the people of Wisconsin. For example, he did not join Attorneys General from across the country, including from neighboring states Minnesota, Illinois and Iowa, in opposing Donald Trump and his Education Secretary Betsy DeVos’s scheme to repeal consumer protections for student loan borrowers. And, despite proclaiming that combating opioid addiction would be a top priority if elected during his 2014 campaign, Schimel has taken no legal action to crack down on the tactics of the producers of prescription opioids, as have other state’s top cops.

He concluded, “If it’s too hard for Brad Schimel to give a full and honest accounting of how he’s spending our money at his office then maybe he should do his job instead of wasting public resources promoting himself.”