

One Wisconsin Now: Milwaukee Co. Sheriff David Clarke keeps public in the dark on his whereabouts

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It May Be Hard for the Sheriff to See the Sun From Under His Hat, but During Sunshine Week the People Deserve to Have His Office Follow the Open Records Law

MADISON, Wis. — A simple request to Milwaukee County's top law enforcement official has yet to be fulfilled as constituents are left in the dark about his whereabouts. Advocacy group One Wisconsin Now requested Sheriff David Clarke's calendar from mid-summer 2016 through February 2017 as the gun-toting, cowboy hat-wearing sheriff was often seen stumping for Donald Trump.

"It may be hard for the Sheriff to see the sun from under his hat, but during Sunshine Week the people of Wisconsin deserve to have his office follow the law and respond to a simple request," commented One Wisconsin Now Research Associate Savion Castro. "As Sheriff Clarke gallivants around the country as a Donald Trump sycophant, publicizing his well-known desire to be appointed to a position in the Trump administration, people are dying in the Milwaukee County Jail Sheriff Clarke oversees, and the public deserves to know what he has been up to instead of his job."

On February 22, One Wisconsin Now submitted a straight-forward open records request for Sheriff Clarke's calendar from July through February 22, 2017. In a response this week, Clarke's office said the request could take at least six more weeks to fulfill but also acknowledged the potential for further delay.

Since One Wisconsin Now requested Sheriff Clarke's schedule, he has had time to:

- attend CPAC
- stand outside Trump Tower
- tweet a photo of meeting Curt Schilling
- promote his book
- tweet a photo of Donald Trump giving the thumbs up at least seven times

Yet, somehow the lawman has not found time to comply with Wisconsin's open records law.

Sheriff Clarke has a history of hiding from the public. Most recently, Clarke fought all the way to the State Supreme Court in an effort to avoid responding to a records request for immigration detainer forms. Ultimately, Clarke got his way, and the public lost out. In a 4-2 decision in February 2017, Justice Rebecca Bradley, for whom Sheriff Clarke helped win an election, ruled Clarke does not have an obligation to release the records.

More concerning, Clarke's inattention to his job doesn't end with open records requests. In 2016 alone, four people died in Sheriff Clarke's jail within a six-month period. A death in April 2016 is being investigated as a homicide, when a man was found severely dehydrated nine days after being arrested. Another death occurred as a woman giving birth did not receive prompt and appropriate medical care and her newborn infant died hours later.

Castro noted a public official releasing their calendar should be a simple, straightforward process. Officials who are supported by taxpayer dollars should be accountable as to how their time is spent doing - or not doing - their job.

Sheriff Clarke has found a lucrative way to leverage his seemingly in-name-only role as Milwaukee County Sheriff. Sheriff Clarke has time for frequent appearances on Fox News and other conservative propaganda sites and to campaign for other politicians. Meanwhile, as has been widely reported, Sheriff Clarke earned over \$200,000 in speaking fees, gifts, travel expenses and accommodations, speaking to over thirty different groups around the country.

He concluded, "The callous treatment and neglect that occurs at the jail alone requires an on-the-job sheriff to begin repairing the severe damage that has been done to families in Milwaukee County. Instead of trotting around the country hoping

to get attention from the president or harassing people in airports, Clarke should come home and do his job.”