

One Wisconsin Now: AG Brad Schimel dodges latest open records request seeking 'swag' purchase documents

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'If Brad Schimel Doesn't Want to be Criticized for Buying Candy and Commemorative Coins Then He Shouldn't Be Doing It'

MADISON, Wis. — In the midst of his campaign for a second term as Attorney General, Brad Schimel seems to have a new strategy to avoid embarrassing news stories: evade open records requests for information about his office activities. The latest instance of his scheme in action is refusing to fulfill One Wisconsin Now's request for updated information about promotional swag Schimel is purchasing using Department of Justice funds.

"Brad Schimel has performed poorly as Attorney General and he's right to be embarrassed about it and worried about re-election prospects," commented One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross. "But trying to evade the law to avoid embarrassment is an unseemly way for the state's top cop to try to lift his sagging political fortunes."

In its latest request, One Wisconsin Now sought documents, "... related to pricing, design, purchases, invoices, payment, and/or e-mail correspondence regarding all promotional items or 'swag' ..." from July 1 2017 through the date of the request, April 17, 2018. Schimel's office indicated that after searching its files there were too many documents to review and refused to turn over responsive records.

An earlier, substantially similar open records request uncovered documents resulting in [embarrassing news coverage](#) for Schimel. On his watch, law enforcement funds were spent on promotional materials including \$10,000 on commemorative coins featuring his motto "kicking ass every day" and other non-essential items for fighting crime like jelly beans, fortune cookies with custom messages, coffee tumblers and golf towels. Ross noted the denial of the open records request for updated swag purchasing records also comes on the heels of revelations that Schimel intended to try to keep secret the details of his paid appearance at a conference hosted by an organization designated as a hate group. In addition to paying Schimel an honoraria, the Alliance Defending Freedom paid over \$3,800 for flights and a week long stay at the tony Ritz Carlton Dana Point, California for Schimel and his wife.

According to documents obtained by One Wisconsin Now and the media, [Schimel intended to keep his attendance secret](#), emailing an aide in the week leading up to the conference that, "... I do not plan to have any portion of it become public information."

"Flouting the state open records law is not an acceptable answer to Brad Schimel's political problems. If he doesn't want to be criticized for buying candy and commemorative coins instead of fighting crime, then he shouldn't be doing it," concluded Ross.