

Institute for Reforming Government: Government in the shadows: Gov. Evers, AG Kaul, DPI and other officials failing to comply with public records law

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Delafield, Wis. – The Institute for Reforming Government (IRG) has waited over eight months for records on DOJ immigration enforcement and the Evers Administration’s Office of Environmental Justice, reflecting a disturbing pattern of delayed transparency and accountability.

WHY IT MATTERS:

Transparency is essential to taxpayers understanding what their government is doing and why. Wisconsin State law requires agencies to respond “as soon as practicable and without delay,” with guidance from the Attorney General suggesting this should take 10 days in many circumstances.

IRG’S REQUESTS:

DPI: In early February IRG’s Center for Investigative Oversight issued a demand letter to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, demanding it respond to the *Dairyland Sentinel’s* public records request seeking transparency on the Forward Exam changes. *Dairyland Sentinel* waited over a year to receive responsive records and finally received records one week after IRG sent a demand letter.

Dairyland Sentinel’s receipt of responsive records resulted in a significant finding –

DPI had organized a meeting of education staff and professionals from across the state in Wisconsin Dells without publicly noticing the meeting. This revelation led to the Legislature’s Joint Finance Committee withholding \$1,000,000 of DPI-designated funds until additional questions were answered.

Evers Administration: One IRG request submitted to the Office of Governor Evers simply requests records related to the creation of the Office of Environmental Justice, an office with little public presence that seems to operate outside public oversight. **Eight months later and IRG has yet to receive responsive records.**

Wisconsin DOJ: In a separate request to the Wisconsin Department of Justice, IRG has sought records related to the Department’s communications relating to immigration enforcement. **Over eight months later and IRG has yet to receive responsive records from the Department of Justice.**

Judiciary: IRG requested records from the six judges assigned to the redistricting cases *Bothfeld v. WEC* and *WBLD v. WEC*. All six issued nearly identical responses, noting the Wisconsin Supreme Court has not decided whether the courts are subject to public records law and curiously claiming no responsive records exist. This raises serious questions about how these judges were selected, and IRG is considering additional requests to determine the process.

Below is a partial accounting of IRG’s outstanding public records requests.

Custodian	Records Sought	Date Sent	Time Since Submission
Department of Justice	Immigration Enforcement	5/28/25	Over 8 months
Governor Evers	Office of Environmental Justice	6/12/25	8 months
Department of Justice	Information Relating to Department of Public Instruction Educator Misconduct Investigations	10/22/25	Over 3 months

Governor Evers	Information Relating to Department of Public Instruction Educator Misconduct Investigations	10/22/25	Over 3 months
Department of Public Instruction	Information Relating to Department of Public Instruction Educator Misconduct Investigations	10/22/25	Over 3 months
Judge SandersMilwaukeeBothfeld v. WEC	Public Records Request Seeking Information Relating to Appointment to Redistricting Panel	12/22/25	Response: No records exist
Judge LonerganOutagamieBothfeld v. WEC	Public Records Request Seeking Information Relating to Appointment to Redistricting Panel	12/22/25	Response: No records exist
Judge GenoveseDaneBothfeld v. WEC	Public Records Request Seeking Information Relating to Appointment to Redistricting Panel	12/22/25	Response: No records exist
Judge ConwayDaneWBLD v. WEC	Public Records Request Seeking Information Relating to Appointment to Redistricting Panel	12/22/25	Response: No records exist
Judge BakerPortageWBLD v. WEC	Public Records Request Seeking Information Relating to Appointment to Redistricting Panel	12/22/25	Response: No records exist
Judge MoranMarathonWBLD v. WEC	Public Records Request Seeking Information Relating to Appointment to Redistricting Panel	12/22/25	Response: No records exist

THE QUOTE:

“IRG will always stand up for other organizations in the state demanding transparency from government agencies. IRG is currently managing a dozen pending public records requests, some of which are well past six

months old,” said Jake Curtis, IRG’s General Counsel and Director of its Center for Investigative Oversight. **“The public has a right to know what its government is doing and IRG will continue to hold public officials accountable for failing to produce public records the public has a right to review.”**

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