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IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF PULASKI COUNTY, ARKANSAS DIVISION

MATTHEW CAMPBELL		PLAINTIFF
v.	Case No. 60CV-23	<u> </u>
ARKANSAS STATE POLICE		DEFENDANT
APPEAL FROM DENIAL OF RIGHTS UNDER		
THE ARKANSAS FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT		

This case is an original action filed pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-107 from a denial of the rights guaranteed under the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act ("AFOIA").

a. Parties, Jurisdiction, & Venue

- 1. Plaintiff Matthew Campbell is an adult citizen of the state of Arkansas, a resident of Pulaski County, and an attorney in good standing with the Bar of the State of Arkansas, and he brings this action as a matter of right under Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-107, as he requested specific public records from the Arkansas State Police, and the defendant both actively and constructively denied the plaintiff's requests and refused to provide the records despite having no valid basis on which to do so.
- 2. Defendant Arkansas State Police is a division of the Arkansas Department of Public Safety, supported in whole or in part with public funds, and is tasked with providing certain public records (as that phrase is defined in the AFOIA) upon request from an Arkansas resident, subject only to the express exclusions contained in the law.

3. Jurisdiction and venue are proper in this Court pursuant to Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-107(a), as Pulaski County is the specified jurisdiction and venue for AFOIA suits brought against the State of Arkansas or one of its departments.

b. Relevant Legal Standards

- 4. As is relevant here, under the AFOIA, "public records" means "writings, [...] electronic or computer-based information, or data compilations in any medium required by law to be kept or otherwise kept and that constitute a record of the performance or lack of performance of official functions that are or should be carried out by a public official or employee [or] a governmental agency...that is wholly or partially supported by public funds or expending public funds." Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-103(7)(A).
- 5. Importantly, "All records maintained in public offices or by public employees within the scope of their employment shall be presumed to be public records." *Id*.
- 6. Our Attorney General has opined that a blanket decision to deny access to certain records, without considering whether any parts of that record might not be exempt, is impermissible under the AFOIA. *See* Ark. Op. Att'y Gen. No. 97-286.
- 7. For over fifty years, it has been a well-settled truth that he AFOIA was "passed wholly in the public interest and is to be interpreted liberally." *Laman v. McCord*, 245 Ark. 401, 405, 432 S.W.2d 753, 755 (1968).
- 8. That liberal interpretation means, when an exemption excludes a specific set of records from disclosure, courts will not read additional exclusions into that exemption to reach other, unlisted records. In other words, "the objectives of the FOIA are such that whenever the legislature fails to specify that any records in the public domain are to be

excluded from inspection, or is less than clear in its intendments, then privacy must yield to openness and secrecy to the public's right to know the status of its own affairs." *Ragland v. Yeargan*, 288 Ark. 81, 85, 702 S.W.2d 23, 25 (1986) (holding that AFOIA exemption of personal tax returns from disclosure did not exclude corporate tax returns from disclosure); *see also Troutt Brothers, Inc. v. Emison*, 311 Ark. 27, 841 S.W.2d 604 (1992) (holding that statute providing for confidentiality in juvenile-court proceedings did not apply to juvenile arrest records when no charges had been filed).

- 9. Furthermore, even the express AFOIA exemptions are to be narrowly construed. *See Hengel v. City of Pine Bluff*, 307 Ark. 457, 821 S.W.2d 761 (1991); *see also Young v. Rice*, 308 Ark. 593, 826 S.W.2d 252 (1992) (holding that AFOIA exemptions are to be narrowly construed "in a manner that favors disclosure").
- 10. Because there is a presumption in favor of disclosure, an entity or custodian claiming an exemption under the AFOIA must carry the burden of establishing that the exemption applies and justifying the nondisclosure of information. *See, e.g., Orsini v. State*, 340 Ark. 665, 13 S.W.3d 167 (2000).
- 11. Importantly, "the courts are not free to fashion common-law exceptions to the FOIA."

 John Watkins, et al., "The Arkansas Freedom of Information Act" (5th ed.), at 109.
- 12. Regarding statutory exemptions, the Arkansas General Assembly amended the AFOIA in 2009 to provide that "beginning on July 1, 2009, in order to be effective, a law that enacts a new exemption to the requirements of this chapter or that substantially amends an existing exemption to the requirements of this chapter shall state that the record or

- meeting is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act." Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-105(a).
- 13. In 2017, the Arkansas General Assembly amended Ark. Code Ann. § 18-8-108 to explicitly exempt from AFOIA disclosure security-related records "concerning the Governor's Mansion and mansion grounds." Ark. Code Ann. § 18-8-108(c); see also The Arkansas Freedom of Information Handbook (20th ed.), at 48 (noting that Ark. Code Ann. § 12-8-108(c) exempts only "security and emergency information concerning the Governor's Mansion and mansion grounds").
- 14. The Arkansas State Police Air Support Unit's Operations Manual states, "The Air Support Unit Commander should process flight request forms, maintain flight information databases, and produce flight activities reports. These reports are used to provide the chain of command information pertaining to the operation and utilization of the department's aviation assets and to provide information to the public requested under the Freedom of Information Act. See, e.g., Ark. State Police Air Support Unit Operations Manual (promulgated Sept. 18, 2017), at § 3.203 (emphasis added).
- 15. The Arkansas State Police General Operations Policy Manual states

E-mail messages that meet the criteria of the definition of a record may be considered public records and must be available to the public. A record must meet the definition of a public records as defined in the *Arkansas Freedom of Information Act*. As with any format, an e-mail message may be considered a public record, unless it falls under one of the exceptions listed in Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-105(b). All public records must be maintained through the appropriate retention period and be made accessible to the public upon request.

Ark. State Police. Gen. Operations Policy Manual (effective July 14, 2008), at 4.

16. That manual continues, "All agency email is subject to the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act." *Id.*, at 6.

c. Facts

- 17. On June 23, 2023, plaintiff requested the following public records from the Arkansas State Police:
 - a. All communications regarding ASP security for Bryan C. Sanders;
 - All documents regarding expenditures and costs associated with ASP security for Bryan C. Sanders;
 - c. All communications regarding ASP security for Sarah H. Sanders;
 - d. All documents regarding expenditures and costs associated with ASP security for Sarah H. Sanders.
- 18. On June 28, ASP attorney Jesi Feld responded to the June 23 request, writing

We cannot release the information you requested. After careful review, the documents you requested are exempt under A.C.A. § 25-19-105(b)(6), A.C.A. § 25-19-105(b)(7), A.C.A. § 25-19-105(b)(12), A.C.A. § 12-8-108, and would unconstitutionally violate the safety and security of the Governor, her family, and the protective detail.

19. On August 7, plaintiff responded to Ms. Feld, explaining in detail that her citation to Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-105(b)(7) was irrelevant because plaintiff was requesting records from and in the possession of the State Police, which would make a reference to the Governor's working-papers exemption meaningless. Plaintiff further explained that Ms. Feld's reliance on Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-105(b)(12) was similarly without merit because communications between the ASP and the Governor's Office are not remotely

"personnel records" that would "constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy" under the AFOIA. Finally, plaintiff pointed out that Ark. Code Ann. § 12-8-108 is almost entirely irrelevant because the only AFOIA exemption in that statute regards records related to the security of the Governor's Mansion. (Plaintiff did note, "I am asking for communications between ASP and the Governor's Office and payroll records and records of other security expenditures. To the extent there might be a record or communication about the governor's mansion or the mansion grounds, those records would be exempt. But no other records would be exempt under 12-8-108.")

- 20. On August 9, Ms. Feld responded with a second attempt at justifying the improper denial of plaintiff's AFOIA request. In that response, Feld contended that the "information requested would violate the [ASP's] statutory obligation to ensure the safety and security of the Governor" and that plaintiff's request "also unconstitutionally violates the safety and security of the Governor, her family, and the protective detail." According, ASP produced no additional records.
- 21. On August 14, plaintiff requested the following public records from the ASP:
 - a. All flight logs for any plane owned or operated by the ASP from 1/1/23 to present;
 - b. All receipts, invoices, or similar documents related to any travel on ASP planes from 1/1/23 to present;
 - c. All travel reimbursements for anyone flying on an ASP plane from 1/1/23 to present;
 - d. All communications regarding ASP airplanes from 1/1/23 to present; and

- e. All flight manifests and passenger lists for any flights on ASP planes from 1/1/23 to present.
- 22. On August 16, Ms. Feld responded with partial production, sending plaintiff invoices from private pilots hired by ASP to fly ASP planes both for the Governor and otherwise, as well as fuel-purchase logs for the ASP planes. Ms. Feld also said that she would be producing the requested communications soon, once she had an estimate from the Department of Information Services on how long it would take to locate and provide the relevant emails.
- 23. On August 21, plaintiff requested the following records from ASP:
 - All records related to any ASP expenditures incurred in sending any ASP personnel to Europe in 2023;
 - All records related to any reimbursements made to ASP personnel for expenses incurred while in or traveling to Europe in 2023;
 - c. All documentation regarding airline tickets and hotel rooms purchased as part of ASP personnel travel to or from Europe in 2023.
- 24. When Ms. Feld contacted plaintiff on August 23 re: both confirmation of receipt of the August 21 request as well as an update on the emails responsive to plaintiff's August 14 request, plaintiff offered to let Ms. Feld focus on the more recent request for European travel records and to provide the emails later once she was not so busy.
- 25. On August 29, ASP Chief Counsel Joan Shipley contacted the plaintiff via email regarding his August 21 request. In her email, Shipley wrote, "After a review of any documents that might be responsive to your request below, we are denying your FOIA

request due to security concerns based on the [ASP's] statutory obligation under ACA 12-8-108, as we did in an earlier request that you made which included this same information."

- 26. Shipley's August 29 email included attachments for information related to plane usage and fuel purchases, though she explicitly stated that they were not going to produce the requested communications. However, the spreadsheet regarding plane usage had all other passengers on Governor Sanders' flights redacted, despite no statutory exemption for that information.
- 27. On August 30, plaintiff made one final attempt to prevent the need for a lawsuit in this matter. In that email, plaintiff provided Ms. Shipley with a detailed explanation for why her legal position was untenable at best and why the law in this matter was on plaintiff's side, giving the ASP until the close of business on August 31 to provide the remaining requested records or plaintiff would file suit.
- 28. On September 1, at 6:12PM, Ms. Shipley sent plaintiff an email with a 210-page attachment purporting to be the responsive email records that plaintiff had requested. However, these emails contained multiple illegal redactions of the names of other passengers who flew on ASP planes with the Governor. Despite having no valid legal basis for these redactions, Ms. Shipley attempted to justify the same by reference to Ark. Code Ann. § 12-8-108, Ark. Code Ann. 25-18-105(b)(13), and Arkansas Attorney General Opinion No. 01-080.
- 29. As of the date of the filing of this lawsuit, ASP has still not produced the following records with proper, legally supported redactions where applicable:

- a. All communications regarding ASP security for Bryan C. Sanders, requested
 June 23, 2023;
- All documents regarding expenditures and costs associated with ASP security for Bryan C. Sanders, requested June 23, 2023;
- c. All communications regarding ASP security for Sarah H. Sanders, requested June 23, 2023;
- d. All documents regarding expenditures and costs associated with ASP security for Sarah H. Sanders, requested June 23, 2023
- e. All flight logs for any plane owned or operated by the ASP from 1/1/23 to present, requested August 14, 2023;
- f. All communications regarding ASP airplanes from 1/1/23 to present;
- g. All flight manifests and passenger lists for any flights on ASP planes from 1/1/23 to present;
- All records related to any ASP expenditures incurred in sending any ASP personnel to Europe in 2023;
- All records related to any reimbursements made to ASP personnel for expenses incurred while in or traveling to Europe in 2023;
- j. All documentation regarding airline tickets and hotel rooms purchased as part of ASP personnel travel to or from Europe in 2023.
- 30. All of the records listed above are public records, subject to disclosure under the AFOIA, and redactions done to any of those records prior to production must be limited only to what is specifically exempted by statute.

d. Analysis: ASP's Violation of AFOIA

- 31. Under the AFOIA, plaintiff was entitled to receive electronic copies of the various public records that he requested. *See Pulaski Co. Special Sch. Dist. v. Delaney*, 2019 Ark. App. 210 (holding that the requesting party dictates the format and manner of receipt of the requested records); *see generally* Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-105.
- 32. The ASP's repeated reliance on Ark. Code Ann. § 12-8-108 either demonstrates an ignorance of the AFOIA and exemptions generally or is a prime example of the ASP's lack of any relevant, apposite authority on which they can rely to shield these records regarding the Governor's travel from the public.
- 33. As noted above, Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-110 mandates that any exemption to the AFOIA that takes effect after July 1, 2009, "shall state that the record...is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act of 1967." Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-110(a). Section 12-8-108 was amended by Act 483 of 2017 to exclude security records related to the Governor's Mansion and mansion grounds, and that exemption explicitly referenced the exemption from the AFOIA as required under Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-110(a).
- 34. Under the doctrine of *expressio unius est exclusio alterius*, "the express designation of one thing may properly be construed to mean the exclusion of another." *Buonauito v. Gibson*, 2020 Ark. 352, 609 S.W.3d 381 (holding that the use of "four-lane highway" in the language of Amendment 91 meant that the money could not be used for six-lane highways). Here, because the legislature amended section 12-8-108 to exempt security records related to the Governor's mansion and mansion grounds, that statute may properly be read as explicitly not excluding records related to ASP communications

about the Governor, ASP expenditures for security of the Governor and her husband except to the extent those records relate to the mansion, passenger lists of persons who flew on ASP planes with the Governor, or ASP expenditures for its own staff to go to Europe (which is so far outside the conceivable bounds of a sane reading of section 12-8-108 that it is absurd for ASP to pretend otherwise).

- 35. Likewise, Ms. Feld's June 28 citations to Ark. Code Ann. §§ 25-19-105(b)(6, (b)(7), and (b)(12) are irrelevant. Subsection 105(b)(6) applies only to "undisclosed investigations by law enforcement agencies of suspected criminal activity." Unless Ms. Feld is suggesting that the ASP is looking into whether it is criminal for the Governor to have security or for the ASP to spend money on providing security to the Governor, it is difficult to overstate how irrelevant this exemption is to the facts at hand.
- 36. Section 25-19-105(b)(7) is the "working papers" exemption. However, that exemption may only be claimed by the Governor's Office or one of the other enumerated offices in that subsection. As Professor John Watkins explained in his treatise on the AFOIA, "The Attorney General has opined that subsection (b)(7) does not reach 'correspondence in the hands of other officials not mentioned in this subsection.'" Watkins, at 152 (quoting Ark. Op. Att'y Gen. No. 93-166). Simply put, the ASP cannot claim the Governor's working-papers exemption under Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-105(b)(7) simply because the emails in question are in the possession and administrative control of the ASP, and the working-papers exemption applies solely to the offices referenced in Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-105(b)(7), which does not include ASP.

- 37. Similarly, Ms. Feld's June 28 reference section 25-19-105(b)(12) is largely without merit. The records requested in that instance—communications regarding security for the Governor and Mr. Sanders as well as expenditures made by ASP as part of that security—are, by and large, not the type that would be "personnel records" as that term is used in the AFOIA. However, even if we pretend like those are personnel records for the sake of argument here, Ms. Feld's reliance on that statute still demonstrates little more than a complete unfamiliarity with the law. Under Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-105(b)(12), records that do not pertain to individual employees, but rather reference employees as a group, are not covered by this exemption. See Ark. Op. Att'y Gen. No. 96-258. Moreover, personnel records are only exempt from disclosure "to the extent that disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-105(b)(12). Because they are only exempt to that extent, "a blanket denial of access is impermissible." Watkins, at 191. Even "the fact that the employee might consider release of the information invasive of his personal privacy is not relevant" to whether the records should be released. See Watkins, at 191. Rather, the courts have created a two-pronged test: (1) is the information so personal or intimate in nature sufficient to give rise to a substantial privacy interest; and (2) if so, does the public's interest in disclosure outweigh that privacy interest? See Young, 308 Ark. 593, 826 S.W.2d 252. ASP's response fails both prongs.
- 38. Neither what ASP and the Governor's Office communicate to one another about security details, nor the expenditures incurred by ASP in providing a security detail are pieces of information that are so personal or intimate that they give rise to a substantial

privacy interest. Rather, these are government officials discussing work performed at public expense by other public employees. Nothing in there is remotely "intimate" such that there is a personal privacy interest. Additionally, even if there was some privacy interest—which there is not—it would surely be outweighed by the public's right to know how much the Governor and her husband's use of ASP personnel and equipment is costing the taxpayers. As the Arkansas Supreme Court explained nearly sixty years ago, "It is indeed difficult to envision a greater interest in public records which reflect the handling of public funds than that of a citizen and taxpayer whose own contribution to the public funds is directly involved. His is a real interest. It is such that, in the absence of some compelling reason to the contrary, he should be entitled to inspect the records pertaining thereto." *Republican Party of Arkansas v. State ex rel. Hall*, 240 Ark. 545, 400 S.W.2d 660 (1966).

- 39. Ms. Feld's other contention on June 28, that releasing the records would "unconstitutionally violate the safety and security of the Governor, her family, and the protective detail" is also without merit. There is no constitutional right to security for "the Governor, her family, and the protective detail" beyond the constitutional rights shared by all Arkansans. This is likely why Ms. Feld did not cite to an actual constitutional provision in support of this position. Regardless, the only right of the Governor and her family to security from the ASP is found in Ark. Code Ann. § 12-8-108, which, as already shown, has no bearing on the release of the records at issue here.
- 40. Despite the fact that none of the citations in Ms. Feld's June 28 email were relevant or applicable, she somehow managed to do even worse in her August 9 response, in which

she claimed that releasing "the information requested would violate the [ASP's] statutory obligation to ensure the safety and security of the Governor" and that plaintiff's request "also unconstitutionally violates the safety and security of the Governor, her family, and the protective detail."

- 41. Regarding the claim that releasing the information would violate ASP's statutory duty, that is patently absurd. The only violation here of a statutory duty is ASP's continuing refusal to provide records that are subject to release under the AFOIA. The "statutory duty" in section 12-8-108 does not exempt the requested records, and merely saying "statutory duty" over and over does not allow ASP to add exemptions to that statute. A "statutory obligation to ensure the safety" of anyone is not, without an express AFOIA exemption, sufficient to withhold a request for records of communications and expenditures, even if those records touch on the statutorily obligated security. Moreover, claiming that plaintiff's request "unconstitutionally violates" literally anything is absolutely ridiculous on its face and stands as an example of how uninformed the ASP staff are regarding the AFOIA if that is truly a position that any of them would take with a straight face.
- 42. Not that Ms. Shipley's excuses for ASP's non-performance are any better, of course. Her reliance on Ark. Code Ann. § 12-8-108 is just as off-base and silly as Ms. Feld's. Indeed, considering that Ms. Shipley is chief legal counsel for ASP, her reliance on a statute that, by its own terms, has nothing to do with the requested records might actually be more egregious than Ms. Feld's. Yet, despite that statute's inapplicability, it is the only citation to any authority that Ms. Shipley even attempted. Other than 12-8-108,

Ms. Shipley's communications regarding the requested records speak only of that statute and a general belief that somehow ASP is above the AFOIA merely by claiming some amorphous "safety" or "security" and pointing at a statute that it appears none of them has read.

- 43. It is inarguable that ASP is the custodian of the records that plaintiff requested, and they do not contend otherwise. As the custodian and the entity claiming that the requested records are exempt under the AFOIA, ASP bears the burden of establishing that there is in fact an exemption under the AFOIA that applies to these records. *See Orsini*, 340 Ark. 665, 13 S.W.3d 167.
- 44. Where, as here, the custodian fails to show anything even resembling an exemption that would preclude production of the requested records, the nonproduction of those records is in violation of the AFOIA.
- 45. Plaintiff tried multiple times to explain to Ms. Feld and Ms. Shipley, both of whom seem confused about the AFOIA and ASP's actual statutory duties thereunder, why their response was in violation of the law. Both of them refused to acknowledge that their position was baseless, resulting in this suit.
- 46. More importantly, ASP's own reliance on an undefined "security" exemption to the AFOIA is belied by the records that they have produced. While the Excel spreadsheet of the flights taken on ASP planes has the other travelers with Governor Sanders redacted, it still shows when Governor Sanders used the plane. And, while the emails provided improperly redact the other parties traveling on Governor Sanders' numerous flights in the ASP plane, they still show when Governor Sanders' staff reserved the

plane, what dates were planned, when those dates changed, the take-off and landing location of the plane, and all other information regarding the flight. Absolutely no one could argue in good faith that knowing all of the details of the governor's flight, down to the tail number of the plane and the time of departure, was not a violation of the "statutory duty" to provide security for the Governor and her family, but merely knowing who else was on a flight that already occurred would be some huge security issue that precludes releasing that information. Indeed, it would also be better—at least from an honesty perspective—if ASP denied the request simply because someone told them not to release who the Governor was traveling with. It still would not be a valid AFOIA exemption, but at least it would not be illogical.

- 47. The same analysis applies to the denial of plaintiff's June 23 request for communications about security details and expenditures by ASP. Except to whatever extent those records refer to security at the Governor's Mansion or on the mansion grounds, those records are subject to disclosure under the AFOIA, and ASP has offered nothing to suggest otherwise.
- 48. Finally, and most egregiously, ASP's bizarre claim that "a constitutional duty" to provide security prevents them from releasing records about ASP expenditures, for ASP personnel, incurred in traveling to and from Europe as part of their official job duties, is laughable. Or it would be, if blatantly disregarding transparency and hiding how many thousands of dollars ASP spent to send troopers to England and France was funny.
- 49. It may very well be that ASP believes that their duty to provide security to the Governor under Ark. Code Ann. 12-8-108 *should* necessarily include exemptions for records

related to all of the security provided. But what they believe and what the law actually says are two different things, and whether certain records should be exempt from the FOIA is a public-policy decision that must be made by the General Assembly and not the courts. *See Hopkins v. City of Brinkley*, 2014 Ark. 139, 12, 432 S.W.3d 609, 617 (2014); see also Harris v. City of Fort Smith, 359 Ark. 355, 365, 197 S.W.3d 461, 467 (2004).

50. Based on all of the foregoing, ASP has violated the AFOIA by refusing to provide public records, including properly unredacted records in some cases, to plaintiff in response to a valid AFOIA request.

e. Conclusion

- 51. James Madison once wrote, "A Popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both."

 Letter from James Madison to W.T. Barry (1865). One hundred years later, the Arkansas Supreme Court echoed this sentiment, writing, "The denial to the public of reasonable access to public records by public officials is not conducive to the perpetuation of our form of government." *Gaspard v. Whorton*, 239 Ark. 849, 394 S.W.2d 621 (1965). The actions of the ASP here, in denying plaintiff access to records that are unquestionably public records and which should absolutely be disclosed under the AFOIA, for what appears to be little more than protecting the Governor's desire not to have anyone know what she is doing or who she is doing it with, is exactly the kind of action that "is not conducive to the perpetuation of our form of government."
- 52. As such, ASP's position should be rejected out of hand, and plaintiff prays that this Court will schedule a hearing within seven days as outlined in the AFOIA, will find that

ASP has violated the AFOIA, and will order ASP to provide the requested records

immediately and without any illegal redactions of passenger lists or any other

disclosable information.

53. Plaintiff does not waive the seven-day provision of Ark. Code Ann. § 25-19-107(b), and

he asks this Court to set this matter for the first available hearing date in accordance

with the statute.

WHEREFORE, based on the foregoing, the plaintiff prays that this Court will set a hearing

within seven days, will find that the Arkansas State Police improperly violated the AFOIA by failing

to provide public records on request, will order the ASP to provide the records immediately, and

will grant the plaintiff any other relief to which he may be entitled.

Respectfully submitted,

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