



**Ohio Senate**

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**Committees:**

Rules, Chair  
Reference, Vice Chair  
Legislative Service Commission

**Bill Harris**  
Senate President  
19th District

October 28, 2008

Governor Ted Strickland  
Statehouse, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Governor Strickland:

Recently, I was alarmed to learn that the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services ("ODJFS"), and specifically Director Helen Jones-Kelley, accessed a state database to check on the background of an Ohioan who received national media attention based on a question raised during the presidential campaign. Even more disturbing was the Director's subsequent statement that, "Our practice is when someone is thrust quickly in the public spotlight, we often take a look" at them. Further, despite the fact that there is an ongoing investigation, your administration indicated that it was confident that there were no "political overtures" to the check. This seems a little premature, and I do not share your confidence.

Abuse of power for political purposes is unacceptable and the holders of this information must be accountable and worthy of the public trust. Accordingly, I am requesting the following:

1. A copy of the policy or an explanation of the "practice" used by ODJFS to determine when it is authorized to access data on individuals thrust into the "public spotlight" and the process for doing so.
2. A list of all individuals whose information has been accessed in the past year because of being in the "public spotlight," as it has been indicated by Director Jones-Kelley that it is ODJFS practice to seek this information. This should include the date/time of the access and the names of the individuals requesting the access.
3. A copy of all documents or emails conveying this information to individuals within ODJFS or outside of ODJFS. Specifically, this information should include who asked for the information, who asked that the action be performed and who the information was provided to.



While the General Assembly has the authority to subpoena this information, I am hopeful that this will not be necessary. Ohioans deserve to know that their personal information is protected and is not at risk of being used by political officials for political gain.

Following the security breach of last year, Ohioans have already lost confidence in the security of their personal information held by the State. Now, in light of these discoveries and statements downplaying what is a very concerning trend, Ohioans are once again questioning the stewardship of their information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Harris". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Bill Harris, President  
Ohio Senate

cc: Helen Jones-Kelley, ODJFS Director