



Whose Docs? Students' Docs!

"Public Records for Government Accountability Reporting," a course at University of Nevada, Reno's Reynolds School of Journalism

Dave Maass

Reynolds Scholar in Residence, Reynolds School of Journalism
Director of Investigations at the Electronic Frontier Foundation

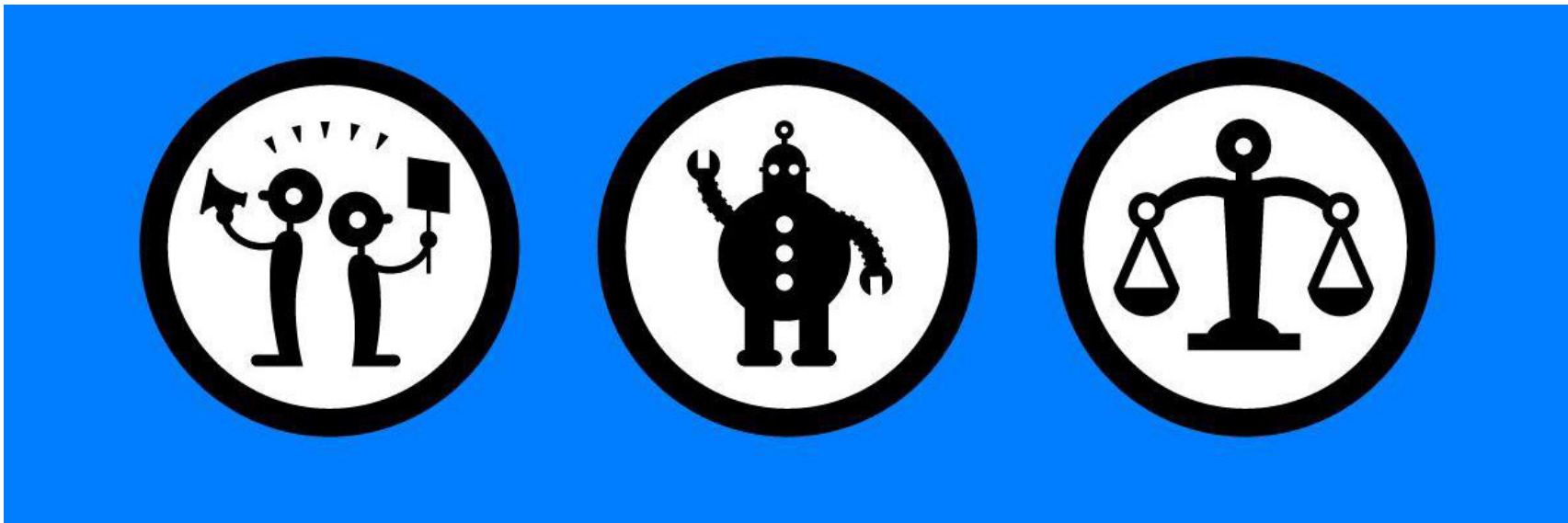
Jesse Cabrera

UNR RSJ Alum



About EFF

Since 1990, the Electronic Frontier Foundation has worked to ensure that rights and freedoms are enhanced and protected as our use of technology grows.



We champion user privacy, free expression, and transparency through impact litigation, policy analysis, grassroots activism, research and technology development.

EFF

A Brief Overview of the Program



Course Leads:

Patrick File, UNR
Dave Maass, EFF
Beryl Lipton, EFF

Additional instruction by Caesar Answers and
Ben Birkinbine

Spring 2019: EFF and RSJ initiated collaboration.

Fall 2019. EFF and RSJ launched 1-credit practical course on public records requests.

Spring 2026. Completed our 13th class of students.

85+ students

More than 800 requests.

EFF

Philosophy of the Course

Filing public records request is a journalism skill on par with interviewing, writing or video editing.

There are lots of wrong ways to write a public records request. But there is no "right" way.

The best way to learn how to get public records is to "always be filing" public records requests.



Course Breakdown

4-12 students each semester

12 90-minute sessions

Guest speakers:

- First Amendment Lawyer (Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press)
- Prominent Journalist (ex. Jason Leopold, Jason Koebler)
- Public Records Officers (ex. Washoe County Communications Manager, Reno City Clerk)



Public Records Quota

Students file appx 15 requests.:

1. Nevada Public Records Act Requests

Assignment: Health Inspections (Restaurant, Tattoo Shop, Hotels, Pools)

2. U.S. Freedom of Information Act Requests

Assignment: FCC Complaints, National Parks Complaints

3. Interstate Public Records Requests/"FOIA Campaign"

Assignment: Typically surveillance-related (drone logs, real-time center contracts)

4. Topical Public Records Requests

Assignment: Requests formulated from news events or shared interest areas (Trump rallies, drones, sports)

5. Self-assigned requests

Ex: Student projects in other classes.



Requests

[File a Request](#) [Export Search Results as CSV](#)

- All
- Yours**
- Drafts
- Following

Search

Status

Completed ▼

User

Agency

Jurisdiction

Projects

Tags

Select requests below in order to apply a bulk action.

--- Go

Showing 1 to 19 of 19

Page 1 of 1

25 items per page

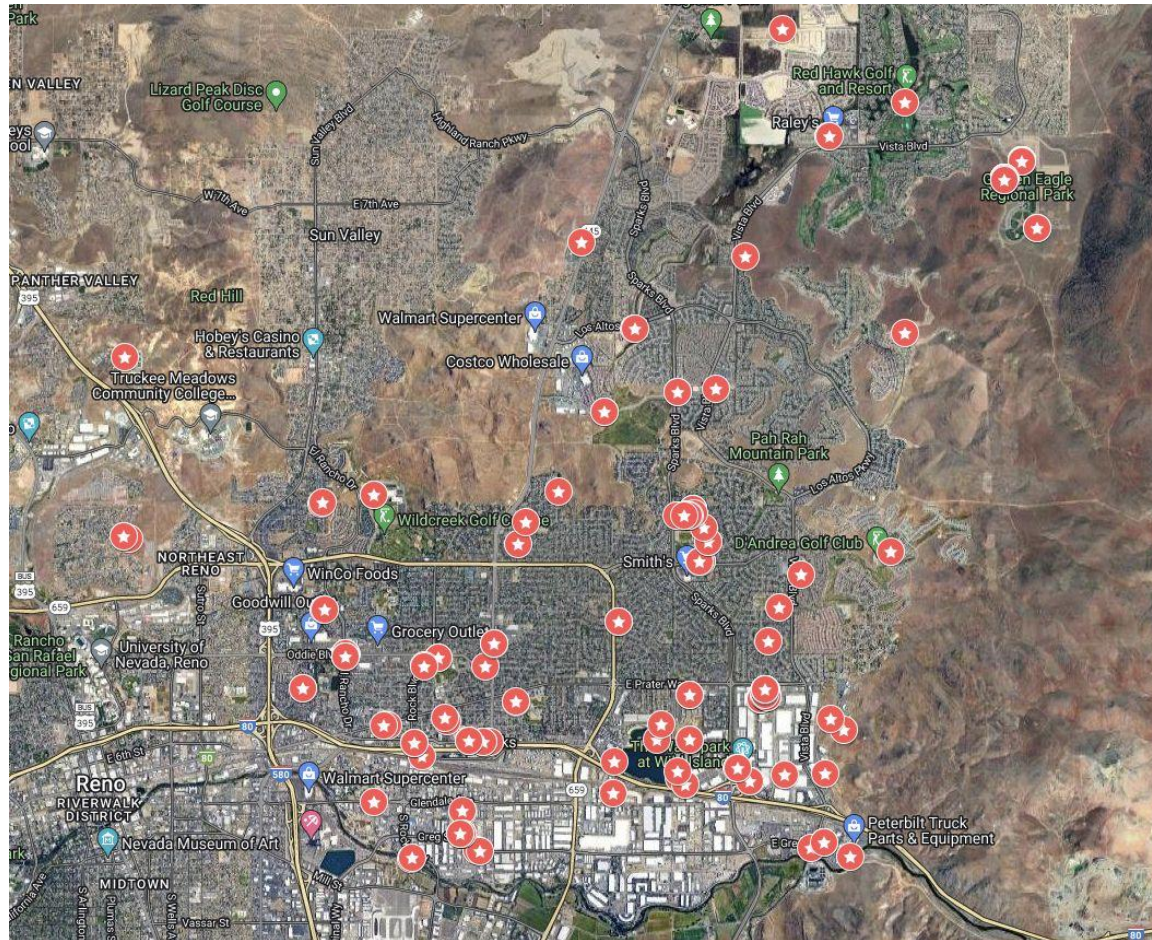
First Page	Previous Page	Next Page	Last Page
------------	---------------	-----------	-----------

<input type="checkbox"/>	Title	User	Agency	Jurisdiction	Updated	Submitted
<input type="checkbox"/>	FCC Complaints - KQED Completed	Dave Maass	Federal Communications Commission	United States of America	04/28/2026	09/22/2025
<input type="checkbox"/>	Drone as First Responder program contract and details Completed	Vivien Fleck	Sparks Police Department	Sparks, NV	03/19/2026	09/22/2025
<input type="checkbox"/>	Drone as First Responder program contract and details (Campbell Police Department) Completed	Riley Overstreet	Campbell Police Department	Campbell, CA	02/03/2026	09/22/2025
<input type="checkbox"/>	Applications and information regarding Vidler Water Company etc.	Vivien Fleck	State Engineers Office - Nevada Division Of Water Resources	Carson City, NV	01/27/2026	10/13/2025

Police Drone Flight Data

Sparks Police
Department

Records
obtained by
Skylar Ferguson



Clark County Unhoused Deaths

Requests filed by
Kelsea Frobes and
John L'Etoile

Homeless Case Nums 2015 - 2018	Name	Date of Death	Age In Years	Race	Gender	Cause Of Death	Other Significant Conditions	Manner Of Death
15-00471	Charles Andrew Hayden	01/14/2015	27	Caucasian	Male	Multiple blunt force motor vehicle versus pedestrian trauma	Unknown	Accident
15-00612	William Neal Holyoke	01/17/2015	51	Caucasian	Male	Multiple blunt force motor vehicle versus pedestrian trauma	Unknown	Accident
15-00634	Steven Lamar Lanier	01/18/2015	43	Black American	Male	Gabapentin and Fentanyl Intoxication due to Arteriosclerotic and Hypertensive Cardiovascular Disease	Arteriosclerotic and Hypertensive Cardiovascular Disease	Suicide
15-01247	Derek Melvin Owens	02/03/2015	57	Black American	Male	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease	Unknown	Natural
15-01707	Larry Bouchey	02/15/2015	53	Caucasian	Male	Coronary Atherosclerosis due to Opiate Intoxication	Opiate Intoxication	Accident
15-01791	Stephen Michael Margraf	02/17/2015	42	Caucasian	Male	Hanging	Unknown	Suicide
15-03337	David	03/30/2015	55	Caucasian	Male	Undetermined	Unknown	Undetermined

Echo Summit/Highway 50 Landslide March 2022

CHP images of explosives used to destroy a boulder.

[Request](#) by
Katherine
Fulwider



EFF

The Good



Northern Nevada Public Health (Washoe Co.)

EFF

Northern Nevada Public Health (Washoe Co.)

Fastest agency we've encountered.

Requests for health inspections filed at the beginning of class are sometimes fulfilled before class is over.

Item #	Violation
13b.	Observed raw shell eggs stored under raw beef in facilities locked meat cage. Inspector instructed operator to reorganize meats to be in proper order of final cook temperature as follows: 1) Ready to eat foods, 2) Raw shell eggs, pork and seafood (Final cook temperature of 145F), 3) Raw beef (Final cook temperature of 155F), 4) Raw chicken and poultry (Final cook temperature of 165F). Please ensure all raw animal products are in the proper order of final cook temperature from top to bottom to prevent cross contamination and foodborne illness.
18.	Observed 4 plastic covered tubs of pasta cooked and cooled the previous night between 49-51F. Inspector instructed operator to discard all 4 tubs of pasta. Please ensure facility is cooling all TCS (time/temperature controlled for safety) foods from 135F to 70F in 2 hours then from 70F to 41F in the next 4 hours to prevent bacterial growth and foodborne illness.
20.	Observed several TCS (time/temperature controlled for safety) food items (cut tomatoes, cut lettuce, cheese, ahi tuna, Poke, and more) between 45-52F throughout facility. Inspector instructed operator to discard TCS food items that were kept had been out of temperature for longer than 4 hours and place TCS food items that had not reached 4 hour time limit in walk in refrigeration unit to cool to 41F and below. Inspector spoke with person in charge about keeping tomatoes chilled on ice while being cut as this TCS food item was out of temperature in several areas of facility. Please ensure facility is keeping all TCS foods being held cold at 41F and below at all times to prevent bacterial growth and foodborne illness.
32.	Observed facility storing cooling pasta in small plastic tubs with lids on. Facility uses thin sheet pans on speed racks to cool foods but must ensure they have properly cooled from 135F to 70F in first two hours then from 70F to 41F in next 4 hours and not put in plastic tubs with lid on until TCS food has reached 41F and below to prevent bacterial growth and foodborne illness.
34.	Observed facility thawing ROP (reduced oxygen packaged) ahi tuna under cold running water without package of tuna cut to allow for air flow to fish while thawing. Please ensure facility cuts packaging of all ROP'd fish while thawing to prevent bacterial growth and foodborne illness.

The logo for EFF (Efficient Food Facility) is displayed in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

The Bad



Nevada Secretary of State's Office

EFF

Corrected: Nevada Secretary of State

Requests for sports agent filings went unfulfilled for more than a year.

After we complained, Sec. Francisco Aguilar fast-tracked the release, apologized to the student requester, and then offered himself up to be grilled by the class.

What we learned: other than collecting the filings, the SoS takes no other action to hold sports agents accountable.



The Ugly



University of Nevada, Reno

EFF

Mountain West Conference Realignment

UNR president Brian Sandoval releases statement on Mountain West conference realignment

The silence ended Tuesday when UNR president Brian Sandoval released a **42-word two-sentence statement** to Nevada Sports Net through the university's communications office. That came one day after the Wolf Pack was reportedly among seven MW schools to sign a **memorandum of understanding** to remain in the conference before Utah State failed to sign the agreement and accepted an invitation into the Pac-12, further destabilizing the MW.

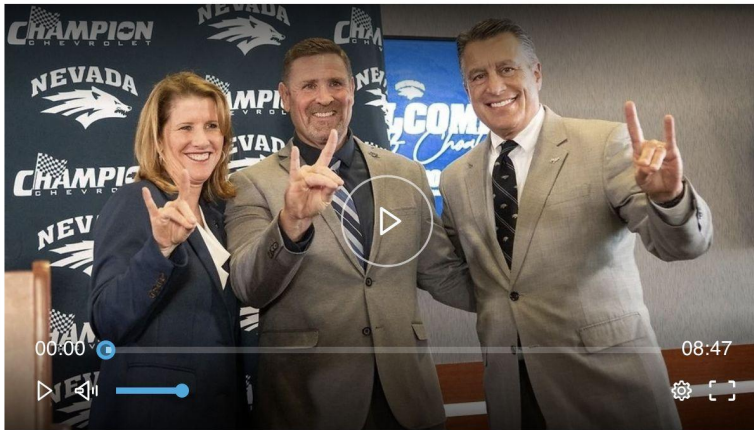
<https://nevadasportsnet.com/news/reporters/unr-president-brian-sandoval-releases-statement-on-mountain-west-conference-realignment>

EFF

Mountain West Conference Realignment

UNR president Brian Sandoval releases statement on Mountain West conference realignment

by Chris Murray | Tue, September 24, 2024 at 4:28 PM



UNR president Brian Sandoval, left, Nevada football coach Jeff Choate, center, and Wolf Pack athletic director Stephanie Rempe pose for a photo after Choate's hiring last December. (NSN file)

“Our leadership is monitoring the current situation and **is in frequent contact with Mountain West commissioner Gloria Nevarez** about the future of the conference,” Sandoval said in the statement. “We will continue to work towards the best solutions for the University of Nevada and our student-athletes.”

<https://nevadasportsnet.com/news/reporters/unr-president-brian-sandoval-releases-statement-on-mountain-west-conference-realignment>

University of Nevada, Reno

1. All supporting documents containing any emails, financial reports, contracts, meeting minutes (audio/video/written), or agendas from January 1, 2022 to present covering conference realignment discussions involving the University of Nevada, Reno, including communications with the Mountain West Conference, Pac-12 Conference, or other athletic conferences.

Maia Ancho

EFF

University of Nevada, Reno Emails

To proceed with processing this portion of your request, we require clarification to ensure we conduct a sufficient search for responsive records. Please provide the following information to assist us in identifying the records you are seeking:

Your request does not include search terms. Please provide focused and specific search terms to help us locate the records you are seeking.

Your request does not identify any specific individuals associated with the records sought. Given that the University employs over 8,000 individuals, narrowing the scope of your request would assist us in locating responsive records. Please identify the individual(s) whose emails you are seeking.

The University is unable to proceed with processing this portion of your request until the requested clarification has been received.

The logo for the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), consisting of the letters 'EFF' in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

University of Nevada, Reno

With respect to your request for financial reports, contracts, meeting minutes (audio/video/written), or agendas:

The University has completed its review and determined that it has no records responsive to this portion of your request.

EFF

What This Means to Students

This is often their first real interaction with government.

This interaction will color their view of government.

When an agency fails a public records request, it is failing the public.