

Re: They Rally Around Our Families With A Pocket Full of Shells

From Eckley, Erika <erika.eckley@iowa.gov>

To pyrebird@phoenixharbor.net, Scott Nicholson <snicholson@jaspercoatty.org>

Date Thursday, May 8th, 2025 at 1:17 PM

I will consider this a withdrawal of your complaint.

Erika Eckley, Executive Director
Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB)

On Thu, May 8, 2025 at 12:54 PM Michael J. Merritt <pyrebird@phoenixharbor.net> wrote:

Jasper County, IA Attorney Scott Nicholson:

As of 1600, CST on 08 MAY 2025 I will be assuming responsibility over all investigative actions in IPIB case 25FC:0014 manifested by [Iowa Code Section 23.6\(4.\)](#). This action is being taken due to compelling evidence of the IPIB's longstanding posture of:

- Retaliatory criminalization of complainants,
- Discrimination rooted in mental health bias, and
- Deployment of quid pro quo tactics in place of proper statutory investigative procedures in accordance with [Iowa Code Section 23.6\(4.\)](#).

As a veteran and citizen advocate, I do not take this step lightly. However, the evidence supporting the IPIB's failure to properly manifest Iowa Code Chapter 23 and enforce rights codified in Iowa Code Chapter 22 compels me to act in defense of citizens' rights and liberties. In service of lawful transparency, accountability, and public trust within the State of Iowa.

Please provide the proper address for the service of court documents and subpoenas for the following public officials:

Jasper County, IA Attorney Scott Nicholson
Jasper County, IA Chief Information Officer Ryan Eaton

<https://youtu.be/3L4YrGaR8E4?si=099ggJavllpSRb7o>

Respectfully,

Michael J. Merritt, USN, Retired
Founder: phoenixharbor.net
Creative Writer/Musician
[Information Warfare Specialist](#)
Information Systems Manager
2510 S 6th ST D24
Marshalltown, IA 50158
[\(641\)-387-9935](tel:(641)-387-9935)
pyrebird@phoenixharbor.net

On Wednesday, May 7th, 2025 at 4:22 PM, Michael J. Merritt <pyrebird@phoenixharbor.net> wrote:

Correction:

The evidence supports the conclusion that both IPIB Executive Director Erika Eckley and Jasper County, IA, Attorney Scott Nicholson are actively proposing an informal resolution designed to circumvent accountability. The terms would effectively absolve both Jasper County, IA, and the Iowa Public Information Board of responsibility for multiple years of unfulfilled records requests and IPIB complaints — in exchange for granting the originator of this correspondence access to public records that are already guaranteed by Iowa Code Chapter 22.

Respectfully,

Michael J. Merritt, USN Retired/Writer

Founder: phoenixharbor.net

Creative Writer/Musician

[Information Warfare Specialist](#)

Information Systems Manager

2510 S 6th ST D24

Marshalltown, IA 50158

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pyrebird@phoenixharbor.net

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Michael J. Merritt <pyrebird@phoenixharbor.net>

Date: On Wednesday, May 7th, 2025 at 4:12 PM

Subject: 25FC:0014 - The Form of Quid Pro Quo

To: records@governor.iowa.gov <records@governor.iowa.gov>, paul.pate@sos.iowa.gov <paul.pate@sos.iowa.gov>, webteam@ag.iowa.gov <webteam@ag.iowa.gov>, mayor@marshalltown-ia.gov <mayor@marshalltown-ia.gov>, mladehoff@marshalltown-ia.gov <mladehoff@marshalltown-ia.gov>, mmitchell@marshalltown-ia.gov <mmitchell@marshalltown-ia.gov>, g nichols@marshalltown-ia.gov <g nichols@marshalltown-ia.gov>, mfonseca@marshalltown-ia.gov <mfonseca@marshalltown-ia.gov>, bkell@marshalltown-ia.gov <bkell@marshalltown-ia.gov>, jschneider@marshalltown-ia.gov <jschneider@marshalltown-ia.gov>, gthompson@marshalltown-ia.gov <gthompson@marshalltown-ia.gov>, cjones@marshalltown-ia.gov <cjones@marshalltown-ia.gov>, Jordan Gaffney <jgaffney@marshallcountya.gov>, va@marshallcountya.gov <va@marshallcountya.gov>, evelyng@newtongov.org <evelyng@newtongov.org>, joelm@newtongov.org <joelm@newtongov.org>, markh@newtongov.org <markh@newtongov.org>, melissad@newtongov.org <melissad@newtongov.org>, randye@newtongov.org <randye@newtongov.org>, stacys@newtongov.org <stacys@newtongov.org>, stevem@newtongov.org <stevem@newtongov.org>, bayens@dps.state.ia.us <bayens@dps.state.ia.us>, btalsma@jasperia.org <btalsma@jasperia.org>, dcupples@jasperia.org <dcupples@jasperia.org>, Erika <erika.eckley@iowa.gov>, ipib@iowa.gov <ipib@iowa.gov>, Scott Nicholson <snicholson@jaspercoatty.org>, reaton@jasperia.org <reaton@jasperia.org>, supervisors@marshallcountya.gov <supervisors@marshallcountya.gov>, Nan Benson <nbenson@marshallcountya.gov>, sheriff@marshallcountya.gov <sheriff@marshallcountya.gov>, treasurer@tos.iowa.gov <treasurer@tos.iowa.gov>, bshutts@jaspersheriff.org <bshutts@jaspersheriff.org>, wsimmons@grinnellpd.com <wsimmons@grinnellpd.com>, kevin.alons@legis.iowa.gov <kevin.alons@legis.iowa.gov>, liz.bennett@legis.iowa.gov <liz.bennett@legis.iowa.gov>, tony.bisignano@legis.iowa.gov <tony.bisignano@legis.iowa.gov>, matt.blake@legis.iowa.gov <matt.blake@legis.iowa.gov>, mike.boussetlot@legis.iowa.gov <mike.boussetlot@legis.iowa.gov>, doug.campbell@legis.iowa.gov <doug.campbell@legis.iowa.gov>, claire.celsi@legis.iowa.gov <claire.celsi@legis.iowa.gov>, mark.costello@legis.iowa.gov <mark.costello@legis.iowa.gov>, dan.dawson@legis.iowa.gov <dan.dawson@legis.iowa.gov>, rocky.dewitt@legis.iowa.gov <rocky.dewitt@legis.iowa.gov>, adrian.dickey@legis.iowa.gov <adrian.dickey@legis.iowa.gov>, molly.donahue@legis.iowa.gov <molly.donahue@legis.iowa.gov>, bill.dotzler@legis.iowa.gov <bill.dotzler@legis.iowa.gov>, dawn.driscoll@legis.iowa.gov <dawn.driscoll@legis.iowa.gov>, lynn.evans@legis.iowa.gov <lynn.evans@legis.iowa.gov>, julian.garrett@legis.iowa.gov <julian.garrett@legis.iowa.gov>, jesse.green@legis.iowa.gov <jesse.green@legis.iowa.gov>, kerry.gruenhagen@legis.iowa.gov <kerry.gruenhagen@legis.iowa.gov>, dennis.guth@legis.iowa.gov <dennis.guth@legis.iowa.gov>, mike.klimesh@legis.iowa.gov <mike.klimesh@legis.iowa.gov>, izaah.knox@legis.iowa.gov <izaah.knox@legis.iowa.gov>, carrie.koelker@legis.iowa.gov <carrie.koelker@legis.iowa.gov>, tim.kraayenbrink@legis.iowa.gov <tim.kraayenbrink@legis.iowa.gov>, mark.lofgren@legis.iowa.gov <mark.lofgren@legis.iowa.gov>, charlie.mcclintock@legis.iowa.gov <charlie.mcclintock@legis.iowa.gov>, janet.petersen@legis.iowa.gov <janet.petersen@legis.iowa.gov>, mike.pike@legis.iowa.gov <mike.pike@legis.iowa.gov>, herman.quirmbach@legis.iowa.gov <herman.quirmbach@legis.iowa.gov>

<herman.quirnbach@legis.iowa.gov>, jeff.reichman@legis.iowa.gov <jeff.reichman@legis.iowa.gov>, david.rowley@legis.iowa.gov <david.rowley@legis.iowa.gov>, ken.rozenboom@legis.iowa.gov <ken.rozenboom@legis.iowa.gov>, sandy.salmon@legis.iowa.gov <sandy.salmon@legis.iowa.gov>, jason.schultz@legis.iowa.gov <jason.schultz@legis.iowa.gov>, tom.shipley@legis.iowa.gov <tom.shipley@legis.iowa.gov>, amy.sinclair@legis.iowa.gov <amy.sinclair@legis.iowa.gov>, dave.sires@legis.iowa.gov <dave.sires@legis.iowa.gov>, art.staed@legis.iowa.gov <art.staed@legis.iowa.gov>, annette.sweeney@legis.iowa.gov <annette.sweeney@legis.iowa.gov>, jeff.taylor@legis.iowa.gov <jeff.taylor@legis.iowa.gov>, thomas.townsend@legis.iowa.gov <thomas.townsend@legis.iowa.gov>, sarah.trone.garriott@legis.iowa.gov <sarah.trone.garriott@legis.iowa.gov>, zach.wahls@legis.iowa.gov <zach.wahls@legis.iowa.gov>, kara.warme@legis.iowa.gov <kara.warme@legis.iowa.gov>, scott.webster@legis.iowa.gov <scott.webster@legis.iowa.gov>, janice.weiner@legis.iowa.gov <janice.weiner@legis.iowa.gov>, cherielynn.westrich@legis.iowa.gov <cherielynn.westrich@legis.iowa.gov>, jack.whitver@legis.iowa.gov <jack.whitver@legis.iowa.gov>, cindy.winckler@legis.iowa.gov <cindy.winckler@legis.iowa.gov>, mike.zimmer@legis.iowa.gov <mike.zimmer@legis.iowa.gov>, dan.zumbach@legis.iowa.gov <dan.zumbach@legis.iowa.gov>, jnehring@marshallcountya.gov <jnehring@marshallcountya.gov>, Schwalbach Nicole <schwalba@dps.state.ia.us>, kruse@dps.state.ia.us <kruse@dps.state.ia.us>, cwebb@marshalltown-ia.gov <cwebb@marshalltown-ia.gov>, clerk@marshalltown-ia.gov <clerk@marshalltown-ia.gov>

Iowa Public Information Board Executive Director Eckley:

1. Introduction

This letter serves as a formal rebuttal to your May 6, 2025, correspondence regarding the proposed withdrawal of my historical public record requests involving Jasper County, Iowa. I am deeply concerned by the tone and implications of your request, and I must respectfully reject the proposal in its entirety.

Your email suggests that by voluntarily withdrawing my historical record requests to various Jasper County departments. At the same time, absolving Jasper County, IA, of any responsibility regarding the evidence of its multiple-year disregard of numerous public records requests. Additionally, the Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB) would simultaneously absolve itself of responsibility to address the multiple complaints I filed due to those entities' persistent noncompliance that evidence shows the IPIB disregarded. I would then be provided access to public records that were requested in correspondence provided during IPIB complaint 25FC:0014. This appears to be a form of quid pro quo — a proposition that undermines the statutory protections afforded under Iowa Code Chapter 22 and conflicts with the core mission of the IPIB in accordance with Iowa Code Chapter 23.

I remind the IPIB that the foundation of open records law in Iowa is not dependent on convenience or deference to government entities but rather the public's fundamental right to transparency and accountability. My requests were made in good faith in accordance with Iowa Code Section 22.4(2.) and were met with disregard, delay, and, in numerous instances, complete silence — violations that I believe deserve investigation and resolution, not dismissal.

I respectfully request that the IPIB fulfill its obligation to investigate each of the pending complaints I submitted. To allow Jasper County, IA, to escape scrutiny by leveraging a withdrawal proposal in exchange for access to public records is not only unethical; it sets a dangerous precedent for other government bodies to evade compliance.

I remain open to dialogue but cannot accept any arrangement that sacrifices accountability or bypasses the statutory enforcement duties of the IPIB.

2. Strategic Analysis of the 06 MAY 2025 Proposed Informal Resolution

Original Proposal from IPIB Executive Director Eckley (May 6, 2025):

"I have been reviewing this matter and it appears there may be a simple solution to resolve this complaint. I propose the following:

Mr. Merritt agrees to withdraw his records request concerning Mr. Jon Dunwell and any subsequent unresolved requests to the County that may exist to this point;

In exchange, Jasper County will provide the current request for the Office 365 Invoice free of charge to Mr. Merritt.

*Upon receipt of the invoice, the complaint will be considered resolved.
Please let me know if these terms are acceptable to both Jasper County and Mr. Merritt."*

Iowa Public Information Board Executive Director Erika Eckley, 06 MAY 2025

The evidence supports the conclusion that both IPIB Executive Director Erika Eckley and Jasper County, IA, Attorney Scott Nicholson are actively proposing an informal resolution designed to circumvent accountability. The terms would effectively absolve both Jasper County, IA, and the Iowa Public Information Board of responsibility for multiple years of unfulfilled records requests and IPIB complaints — in exchange for granting the originator of this correspondence access to a public records that are already guaranteed by Iowa Code Chapter 22.

3. "This for That" Structure:

- **This:** *"Mr. Merritt agrees to withdraw his records request concerning Mr. Jon Dunwell and any subsequent unresolved requests to the County that may exist to this point,"*
- **For That:** *"In exchange, Jasper County will provide the current request for the Office 365 Invoice free of charge to Mr. Merritt."*

This conditional exchange is not a "resolution" — it is an attempt to avoid accountability under the guise of compromise.

4. The Cipher Hunter's Proposed Lawful Resolution:

Jasper County, IA, can either:

1. Provide the requested Microsoft 365 billing statements along with the requested historical correspondence showing any fees I allegedly failed to pay;
2. Or, Jasper County, IA can present those records in court.

Legal Disclaimer: The included YouTube video serves as an allegorical representation of what I believe to be Executive Director Erika Eckley's repeated attempts to reframe unethical and potentially discriminatory conduct as lawful administrative practice.

<https://youtu.be/lghIDQSbxw8?si=rCFXKJ9sHNSLSSiY>

Respectfully,

Michael J. Merritt, USN, Retired
Founder: phoenixharbor.net
Creative Writer/Musician
Information Warfare Specialist
Information Systems Manager
2510 S 6th ST D24
Marshalltown, IA 50158
(641)-387-9935
pyrebird@phoenixharbor.net

On Wednesday, May 7th, 2025 at 8:32 AM, Scott Nicholson <snicholson@jaspercoatty.org> wrote:

Ms. Eckley,

Jasper County approves this proposal and will comply.

Thank-you.

Scott Nicholson.

From: Eckley, Erika <erika.eckley@iowa.gov>

Sent: Tuesday, May 6, 2025 4:01 PM

To: Scott Nicholson <snicholson@jaspercoatty.org>; pyrebird@phoenixharbor.net
pyrebird@phoenixharbor.net <pyrebird@phoenixharbor.net>

Cc: Ryan Eaton <reaton@jasperia.org>

Subject: Suggested informal resolution of 25FC:0014


[**NOTICE:** This message originated outside of Jasper County -- **DO NOT CLICK** on **links** or open **attachments** unless you are sure the content is safe.]

All,

I have been reviewing this matter and it appears there may be a simple solution to resolve this complaint. I propose the following:

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- In exchange, Jasper County will provide the current request for the Office 365 Invoice free of charge to Mr. Merritt.
- Upon receipt of the invoice, the complaint will be considered resolved.

Please let me know if these terms are acceptable to both Jasper County and Mr. Merritt.

 Image removed by sender.

Erika Eckley, JD, MPA

Executive Director

Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB)

510 E 12th Street

Jessie M. Parker Building, East

Des Moines, Iowa 50319

(515) 393-8339

erika.eckley@iowa.gov

www.ipib.iowa.gov