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FORMER WCPSS ADMINISTRATOR SUES WAKE COUNTY SCHOOLS FOR OBSTRUCTING PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST

WCPSS withholds public records with exessive $68,000 fee

Former Wake County school administrator Dr. Scott Lassiter filed a lawsuit alleging that excessive fees, delays, and questionable redactions have obstructed access to public information regarding an ongoing lawsuit for wrongful termination.

In response to an initial excessive charge of $68,467.38 in exchange for public records, Lassiter's attorney requested a more narrow search to make records financially obtainable. The new price tag of $15,395.56 was assessed, and WCPSS produced a 163-page report void of substance with repetitive and unrelated material.

"Public records belong to the public, not the bureaucrats who happen to possess them. Sunshine laws mean very little if government can price ordinary citizens out of exercising their rights," said Lassiter. "Today it's my records. Tomorrow it could be a parent investigating school safety, a journalist examining public spending, or a teacher questioning a personnel decision."

Lassiter's attorney requested records beginning in July 2026 concerning his employment, political activity, school safety, personnel decisions, and communications among senior district officials.

The records released contain extensive attorney-client privilege redactions, including disputed portions of March 2024 communications concerning Lassiter's political campaign video involving senior administrators and district communications personnel.

"Attorney-client privilege is an important protection, but it cannot be used to make uncomfortable government communications disappear," Lassiter said.

The complaint also raises concerns, upon information and belief, that WCPSS employees were observed culling requested documents, an allegation for which Lassiter seeks judicial oversight.

The lawsuit asks the court to compel production of responsive, nonexempt records, establish deadlines, scrutinize processing fees, examine disputed redactions, preserve records, and award authorized attorney's fees and costs. North Carolina law provides for priority consideration of these actions, subject to applicable mediation requirements.

More than a century ago, future Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis famously observed, “Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants.” North Carolina embraced the principle in **1935**, enacting public-records legislation recognizing citizens' right to examine government business.

Today, N.C.G.S. § 132-1 expressly declares that public records are **“the property of the people.”** Chapter 132 requires prompt access to nonexempt records and generally assigns agencies the cost of separating confidential information from public information. Although reasonable special-service charges may be permitted, the lawsuit challenges whether WCPSS's proposed fees improperly shift statutory responsibilities to the requester.

“This case is bigger than me or Wake County Public Schools,” said Lassiter. “Government officials work for the people. The public shouldn't have to hire a lawyer and go to court just to get its own government to follow the law. But when that's what it takes, somebody has to stand up.”

Lassiter is represented by Raleigh attorney William Woodward “Woody” Webb Sr. of Edmisten & Webb Law.