

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

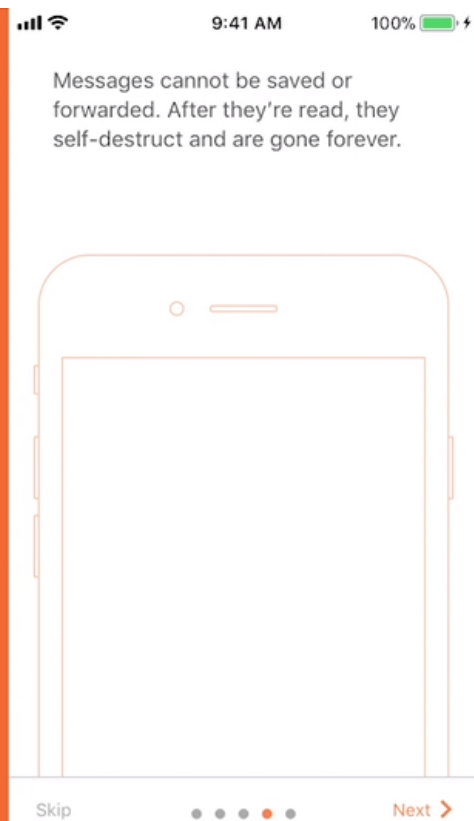
Lawsuit alleges Gov. Greitens conspired to violate Missouri open records laws

BY JASON HANCOCK



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Instead, Confide
encrypts messages
and they
self-destruct
after being read.



With Confide, messages can't be saved, so it's impossible to know what senior staff were using it to conduct state business out of the public's

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A pair of St. Louis County attorneys filed a lawsuit last week accusing Gov. Eric Greitens and his staff of engaging in an ongoing conspiracy to violate Missouri's open records laws by using an app that deletes text messages after they've been read.

Ben Sansone and Mark Pedroli are asking a Cole County judge to prohibit Greitens from using the app and to require him to reveal the names of all staffers who have used it.

Last month The Star revealed that [the governor and his senior staff use the Confide app](#), which also prevents someone from saving, forwarding, printing or taking a screenshot of a text.

In the lawsuit, Sansone and Pedroli argue use of the app by elected officials and government employees is "illegal and constitutes an ongoing conspiracy to violate the Missouri Sunshine law and Missouri state and local records law, not to mention a significant affront to the open government and democratic traditions of Missouri and the United States."

The governor's spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the lawsuit.

Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley announced last month that [his office would investigate](#) whether the governor and his staff were illegally destroying public records by using the app.

Use of the app raised concerns among transparency advocates who worried it could be used to subvert Missouri open records law. Because the app is designed to eliminate a paper trail, it is impossible to determine whether the governor and his staff are using it to conduct state business out of view of the public, or whether they're using it for personal and campaign purposes.

Sansone and Pedroli are neighbors in the city of Des Peres in St. Louis County. Sansone also serves on the Des Peres board of aldermen.

Pedroli told The Star the pair previously joined forces to filed [an open records lawsuit in 2016](#) against the city of Des Peres in a dispute over a development project near their neighborhood.

Since then, Pedroli said, they've formed an organization called The Sunshine Project which aims to "hold the government responsible for turning over

In addition to asking a judge to issue an injunction to stop the governor and his staff from using Confide, the lawsuit is asking for a fine to be imposed.

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