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Description of document: Office of Personnel Management (OPM) records provided

to Chairman Darrell Issa, House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, concerning the

administration of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA),

2011

Requested: 10-December-2011

Released date: 13-September-2012

Posted date: 25-February-2012

Source of document: U.S. Office of Personnel Management

FOIA Requester Service Center

1900 E Street, N.W.

Room 5415

Washington, D.C. 20415-7900

Fax: (202) 606-1719 Email: <u>foia@opm.gov</u>

Note: This is one of several files on the same subject for various

agencies available on governmentattic.org. See:

http://www.governmentattic.org/5docs/chairmanIssa.htm

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UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

September 13, 2012

In response to your Freedom of Information Act request dated December 10, 2011, regarding records the U.S. Office of Personnel provided to the Honorable Darrell Issa, whose office requested of the agency in January 2011, data concerning the administration of the Freedom of Information Act, and a copy of all correspondence sent to the Honorable Darrell Issa regarding the January 2011 request, I have attached all responsive records.

Please contact Donna Lease Batdorf, of my staff, if you require further assistance. Mrs. Lease Batdorf can be reached by email at <u>Donna.LeaseBatdorf@opm.gov</u> or on 202-606-4812.

Sincerely,

Tania A. Shand

Director

Congressional and Legislative Affairs U.S. Office of Personnel Management



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT Washington, DC 20415

AUG 2 4 2010

The Honorable Darrell Issa
Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight ad Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
2347 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0549

The Honorable Patrick McHenry
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives
United States House of Representatives
224 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Members Issa and McHenry:

Thank you for your letter dated, March 25, 2010, concerning the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) program within the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). You are requesting specific data to help you understand how OPM has changed its FOIA practices in response to the directives of the White House and Justice Department to facilitate openness and transparency in government.

OPM's Chief FOIA Officer is also the agency's Chief Information Officer (CIO) and leads the agency's implementation of the President's Openness Initiative. He reports directly to me and is in daily contact with senior most executives who influence the response to FOIA requests. In addition, the agency's FOIA Service Center, supervised by the agency's FOIA Public Liaison, reports to the CIO. As part of OPM's reorganization, the CIO established a records management unit led by a senior official with extensive government wide experience in personnel records policy. He designated the Records Management chief to serve as the FOIA Public Liaison, thereby integrating the review of personnel records disclosures (a frequent type of request received by OPM) with broader management of the FOIA program. The change is expected to increase efficiencies in the review and processing of FOIA requests.

We have enclosed the following in response to your requests.

1. You requested: Our complete FOIA log.

We have enclosed as Attachment 1: OPM's complete FOIA log. It includes the identity of each party that requested records and/or information, the date the request was received, the date the request was fulfilled, whether the request was rejected, and if so, what exemption or exclusion was cited.

The attached log is contained in two Excel files, one for OPM's Federal Investigative Service (FIS), which receives the largest number of FOIA and Privacy Act requests. The second log is for all other FOIA requests received by OPM.

2. You requested: A complete explanation for each full or partial FOIA rejection since January 21, 2009.

Based on clarification from Mr. Jonathan Skladany, a staff member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, we have enclosed, as **Attachment 2**, two tables. **Table 1** is a list of the number of times Exemptions 1 through 9 of the FOIA were used in FY2009 for full or partial denial of requests. **Table 2** indicates the number of times OPM granted a full or partial denial under the FOIA in FY2009. It also shows the number of times OPM withheld information in full for reasons other than Exemptions 1 through 9 of the FOIA.

3. You requested: All records and communications referring or relating to the implementation of President Obama's January 21, 2009, memorandum on FOIA.

We have enclosed as Attachment 3, all records and communications sent by OPM's FOIA Public Liaison to all OPM FOIA points of contact referring or relating to the implementation of President Obama's January 21, 2009, memorandum on the Freedom of Information Act and/or Attorney General Eric Holder's memorandum of March 19, 2009, on the Freedom of information Act.

OPM has improved its business process for accepting FOIA requests by working with requesters to perfect their FOIA requests. As a result, the number of perfected requests received by OPM has declined. However, the percentage of perfected FOIA requests granted in full has remained consistent with previous years. Most of OPM's requests are for records containing personally identifiable information (PII). Due to the PII contained in such records, there may not be a way to release information in full and simultaneously protect sensitive personal information.

I hope that this information is of assistance to you. Please let us know if you have additional questions or concerns regarding this issue.

Sincerely.

John Berry

Director

Enclosures

From: Miller, Margaret A.

Sent: Friday, April 17, 2009 5:27 PM

To: FOIA Contacts Cc: Witt, Ryan C.

Subject: FW: Guidance on President Obama's FOIA Memoranda and Attorney General Holder's FOIA Guidelines

Importance: High

Attachments: Final. Obama Holder FOIA Memo MAP March 2009.ppt

The Department of Justice has just issued guidance for implementing President Obama's FOIA memorandum and Attorney General Holder's FOIA guidelines. The guidance has been posted to the Department of Justice website at http://www.usdoi.gov/oip/foiapost/2009foiapost8.htm. I encourage you to read and implement it.

As you may know, President Obama issued a memorandum to the head of federal agencies and departments on January 21, 2009, his first full day in office, stressing matters of transparency and openness in government. The Department of Justice guidance, which I have mentioned above, amplifies key principles in the President's memorandum. They include responding to requests "promptly and in a spirit of cooperation", adopting "a presumption in favor of disclosure," and applying that presumption "to all decisions involving [the] FOIA."

The attached slides, provided by the Department of Justice at a meeting in late March, also address the President's memo and topics covered in the Department of Justice guidance.

I believe that we at OPM have managed our FOIA program in a manner consistent with such principles. I am proud of your work and ask you to look for ways to continue fostering the principles of cooperation, responsiveness, and openness in your work with the FOIA here at OPM.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the guidance, please contact Ryan Witt, our FOIA coordinator, or me. Ryan can be reached at (202)606-3642 or by email at Ryan.Witt@opm.gov. I can be reached at (202)606-2699 or by email at Margaret.Miller@opm.gov.

Margaret

Margaret A. Miller
Chief, Plans and Policies Group and
FOIA Public Liaison
Center for Information Services (CIS/PPG)
Office of Personnel Management (OPM)
Washington, DC 20415
mamiller@opm.gov
(202) 606-2699

----Original Message-----

From: DOJ.OIP.FOIA [mailto:DOJ.OIP.FOIA@usdoj.gov]

Sent: Friday, April 17, 2009 4:50 PM

To: Aitken, Steven; Ash, Darren; Ashworth, Russ; Ballard, E.; Barnes, Janet L; Bartholow, Steven; Bartlett, Michael; Bennet, Marilyn; Bertina Adams; Bhagowalila, Sanjeev (Sonny); Black, David; Boling, Edward; Booker, Carol; Bryant, Wil; Buffon, Kathleen; Callear, James; Calvert, Lawrence; Carson, David; Chellaraj, Raikumar; Cinerney, R.M.; Conley, Michael; Cuffe, Elizabeth; Danker, Deborah; De Deo, Carol; Duncan, Thomasenia; Ellison, Michele P.; Flahavan, Richard; Ford, Delorice; Fortuno, Victor; Gregory, Karen V.; Grosner, Brian; Hackett, John; Hall, Bill; Hendricks, Kenneth A; Hertz, Philip; Hill, Beverly; Hughes, Inez; Johnson, Jennifer L.; Johnson, Mary; Jordan, Mosina; Jurith, Edward; Kaye, Janice; Kearney, Barry; Keats, Craig; Killette, Delores; Knapp, Lindy; Kolb, Ingrid; Kronopolus, Cathy; Kropf, John (DHS); Laponsky, Mark; Mancini, Nadine; Mantini, John; Mason, Eileen; Mastroianni, Peggy; mspb@mspb.gov; McDonnell, Erin; McKenna, Michael; Monroig, Emma; Morgan, Rita M; Nelson, Keith; Nichols, Dorothy; Oliveri, Medaris; Otterman, Kate; Petrick, James; Powell, D. Matthew; Reynolds, Emily; Rhodes, Michael; Richards, Laura; Ruiz, Diego; Ryan, JoAnn; Schaub, Patricia; Scherer, Robert; Schiffer, Lois; Shannon, Matthew; Shapiro, Robert; Sorbera, Joe; St. Louis, N.; Stern, Gary; Stevenson, Todd; Suro-Brodie, Carmen; Tarasiuk, Aldolfo; Tittsworth, Jim; Tobey, Bill; Travers, Linda; Trinity, Frank; Verreau, Rebecca; Wallace, Sally; Warner, Christopher; Watson, Carole; Weiss, Nancy; Wellman, Tricia; Wiliams, Steven; Winefordner, Arlin; Wolff, Otto J.: Zak, Leocadia: Apol, D; Caldwell, J.; Callear, James; Cantor, Jonathan; Jacobs, Robert; Johnson, Tammye; Kaepplein, Kristin; Koppel, Rosa; Leonard, Rachael; Lewis, Vicky; Lighton, Sharon; Moye, Melba; Overton,

Bruce; Phelps, John; Shaw, Cynthia; Spencer, William; Weems, Dorothy; White, Chris; Yoshimura, Edwin; Arrington, Angela; Ball, Katherine; Bridge, Diane L.; Broderick, Marilyn; Cramer, Jodi; Dangin, Alfan; Adams Jr., Albert D.; An, Gil Hyun; Apol, David; Babcock, Lisa; Batie, Patricia; Bender, Stuart; Berger, Robin; Berumen, Malia; Boling, Edward A.; Bomgardner, Elizabeth; Boyd, Harriette; Brockner-Ryan, Beth; Buck, John; Carter, Mildred; Castelli, Laurence; Castelli, Michael; Cerveny, John; Christopher, Nancy; Coe, A. Ren'ee; Cornell, Susan R.; Costello, Dan; Cragg, Scott; Crowley, Gerald; Diaz-Ortiz, Martha; Dolan, Brenda; Duncan, Hilario R.; Eckert, Robert; Ehrlich, Carol; Femi, Judy; Fina, Joan; Fisch, Fred; FitzGerald, E. William; Frangipane, Noelle; Frye, Nneka; Garner, Stephanie D.; Gee, Patricia; Gottesman, Larry; Gottry, Heather C.; Grafeld, Margaret P.; Gressman, William E.; Gross, Jacqueline; Hackett, John F.; Hair, Shoko; Hardy, Dionne; Hawkins, Sharron; Higgins, Kitty; Hite, Jeanette S.; Holland, A.; Hollingsworth, Judi; Ingersoll, Janet; Inman, Katie; Jagadesan, Des; Jeffcoat, Mary A.; Jensen, Leslie; Johnson, Clay; Kammer, Will; Kirkpatrick, Christopher; Korb, Timothy; Krol, Jim; Kurt, Christopher; Laster, John; Lazaroff, Joy; Lerner, A.; Link, Kendra; Livornese, John; Low, Carol; Luczynksi, Kimberley; Luna, Stella; Marquis, Michael S.; Mason, Tony; Matthews, Carol A.; Mcconnell, Stephen; McCoy, Regina; McCready, Andrew W.; McLaughlin, Jeanne; Means, Judith; Mengel, David; Mills, Alberta; Newman, Annette; Nichols, Russell A.; Noble, Jacqueline; Oleinick, Lew; Oliver, Ramona; Papoi, Catherine; Parsons, Bobbie; Paskar, Joanne; Patermaster, Mara T; Patten, Mae R.; Payne, Latita M.; Peppe, Margaret G.; Petersen, Daniel; Phillips, Pamela N.; Plick, Joe; Ratchford, Jeanne; Ray, Kathy; Rosas, Christina E.; Sadler, Fred; Smith, Angela; Tanaka, Allison; Aitken, Steven; Allison Lerner; Army Human Resources Command; Barber, Delores J.; Beemer, Anne; Bestrain, Peggy; Blagg, Mahlon; Brown, Miriam; Bryant, Maureen; Carr Jr., Paul J.; Chase, Michelle: Combs, Robert: Corbman, Laura: Debrae, Melvin; DeProspero, Peggy; Dickey, Jennifer; Drabek, Cynthia; Easter, Stacy; Eiden, Leo; English, Sarah; Gilmore, Hugh; Hawkins, Sandra, L.; Henshall, Dave; Hester, tom; Hogan, Jim; Hudson, Jennifer; Jackson, Barbara; Jackson, Kim S.; Johnson, Toyia; Jones, Thom; Kahn, R.; Katilius, Lizzette; Lesko, Stephanie; Levitt, Marilyn; Longnecker, Tom; MacNeil, Deirdre; Mallus, Alex; Mancini, N.; Marr, Jennifer; Martz, Amanda; Mastromichalis, Keith; Miller, Margaret A.; Morris, Alexander; Morris, Ladonna; Moss, Sara; Motto, Brian; Nelson, Delores; O'Connor, Cindy; Oliveri, Medaris; Olsen, Matthew; Ortiz, Raho; Otterman, Kate; Pavlik-Keenan, Catrina; Pickworth, Melissa; Poore, Ray; Reali, Francis; Rollor, Audrey; Rouse, Dianne; Salva, Dianne; Sasser, Tracey; Schecker, Larry; Sealing, Donna; Senzel, David; Sharpe, Thomas; Sheils, Peter; Shonks, Margie; Siegelbaum, Jill; Singer, Harold; Smith, Nancy Kegan; Steinberg, David; Supik, Frank; Suzuki, Shari; Sydnor, Cynthia; Taylor, Anastazia; Thomas, Charlene Wright; Tilley, Steven D.; Underwood, Dale; Vance, Frank D.; Vankevich, Peter M.; Veach, Kimberly: Virga, Jane: Washington, Angela; Watt, Sheree; Weber, Frank; Westmoreland, Carol; Wiggins, Dawn; Williams, Alesia; Wooden, Eric; Wright, Lauren E.; Yates, Ruth; Yohe, Melanie Subject: Guidance on President Obama's FOIA Memoranda and Attorney General Holder's FOIA Guidelines

To: Chief FOIA Officers and Principal FOIA Contacts

This is a courtesy e-mail to let you know that the Office of Information Policy today posted guidance to agencies on President Obama's FOIA Memoranda and Attorney General Holder's FOIA Guidelines. You can view the article at http://www.usdoj.gov/oip/foiapost/2009foiapost8.htm.

File4 File 14



Office of the Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

March 19, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

SUBJECT: The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, reflects our nation's fundamental commitment to open government. This memorandum is meant to underscore that commitment and to ensure that it is realized in practice.

A Presumption of Openness

As President Obama instructed in his January 21 FOIA Memorandum, "The Freedom of Information Act should be administered with a clear presumption: In the face of doubt, openness prevails." This presumption has two important implications.

First, an agency should not withhold information simply because it may do so legally. I strongly encourage agencies to make discretionary disclosures of information. An agency should not withhold records merely because it can demonstrate, as a technical matter, that the records fall within the scope of a FOIA exemption.

Second, whenever an agency determines that it cannot make full disclosure of a requested record, it must consider whether it can make partial disclosure. Agencies should always be mindful that the FOIA requires them to take reasonable steps to segregate and release nonexempt information. Even if some parts of a record must be withheld, other parts either may not be covered by a statutory exemption, or may be covered only in a technical sense unrelated to the actual impact of disclosure.

At the same time, the disclosure obligation under the FOIA is not absolute. The Act provides exemptions to protect, for example, national security, personal privacy, privileged records, and law enforcement interests. But as the President stated in his memorandum, "The Government should not keep information confidential merely because public officials might be embarrassed by disclosure, because errors and failures might be revealed, or because of speculative or abstract fears."

Pursuant to the President's directive that I issue new FOIA guidelines, I hereby rescind the Attorney General's FOIA Memorandum of October 12, 2001, which stated that the Department of Justice would defend decisions to withhold records "unless they lack a sound

legal basis or present an unwarranted risk of adverse impact on the ability of other agencies to protect other important records."

Instead, the Department of Justice will defend a denial of a FOIA request only if (1) the agency reasonably foresees that disclosure would harm an interest protected by one of the statutory exemptions, or (2) disclosure is prohibited by law. With regard to litigation pending on the date of the issuance of this memorandum, this guidance should be taken into account and applied if practicable when, in the judgment of the Department of Justice lawyers handling the matter and the relevant agency defendants, there is a substantial likelihood that application of the guidance would result in a material disclosure of additional information.

FOIA Is Everyone's Responsibility

Application of the proper disclosure standard is only one part of ensuring transparency. Open government requires not just a presumption of disclosure but also an effective system for responding to FOIA requests. Each agency must be fully accountable for its administration of the FOIA.

I would like to emphasize that responsibility for effective FOIA administration belongs to all of us—it is not merely a task assigned to an agency's FOIA staff. We all must do our part to ensure open government. In recent reports to the Attorney General, agencies have noted that competing agency priorities and insufficient technological support have hindered their ability to implement fully the FOIA Improvement Plans that they prepared pursuant to Executive Order 13392 of December 14, 2005. To improve FOIA performance, agencies must address the key roles played by a broad spectrum of agency personnel who work with agency FOIA professionals in responding to requests.

Improving FOIA performance requires the active participation of agency Chief FOIA Officers. Each agency is required by law to designate a senior official at the Assistant Secretary level or its equivalent who has direct responsibility for ensuring that the agency efficiently and appropriately complies with the FOIA. That official must recommend adjustments to agency practices, personnel, and funding as may be necessary.

Equally important, of course, are the FOIA professionals in the agency who directly interact with FOIA requesters and are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the Act. I ask that you transmit this memorandum to all such personnel. Those professionals deserve the full support of the agency's Chief FOIA Officer to ensure that they have the tools they need to respond promptly and efficiently to FOIA requests. FOIA professionals should be mindful of their obligation to work "in a spirit of cooperation" with FOIA requesters, as President Obama has directed. Unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles have no place in the "new era of open Government" that the President has proclaimed.

Working Proactively and Promptly

Open government requires agencies to work proactively and respond to requests promptly. The President's memorandum instructs agencies to "use modern technology to inform citizens what is known and done by their Government." Accordingly, agencies should readily and systematically post information online in advance of any public request. Providing more information online reduces the need for individualized requests and may help reduce existing backlogs. When information not previously disclosed is requested, agencies should make it a priority to respond in a timely manner. Timely disclosure of information is an essential component of transparency. Long delays should not be viewed as an inevitable and insurmountable consequence of high demand.

In that regard, I would like to remind you of a new requirement that went into effect on December 31, 2008, pursuant to Section 7 of the OPEN Government Act of 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-175. For all requests filed on or after that date, agencies must assign an individualized tracking number to requests that will take longer than ten days to process, and provide that tracking number to the requester. In addition, agencies must establish a telephone line or Internet service that requesters can use to inquire about the status of their requests using the request's assigned tracking number, including the date on which the agency received the request and an estimated date on which the agency will complete action on the request. Further information on these requirements is available on the Department of Justice's website at www.usdoi.gov/oip/foiapost/2008foiapost/30.htm.

Agency Chief FOIA Officers should review all aspects of their agencies' FOIA administration, with particular focus on the concerns highlighted in this memorandum, and report to the Department of Justice each year on the steps that have been taken to improve FOIA operations and facilitate information disclosure at their agencies. The Department of Justice's Office of Information Policy (OIP) will offer specific guidance on the content and timing of such reports.

I encourage agencies to take advantage of Department of Justice FOIA resources. OIP will provide training and additional guidance on implementing these guidelines. In addition, agencies should feel free to consult with OIP when making difficult FOIA decisions. With regard to specific FOIA litigation, agencies should consult with the relevant Civil Division, Tax Division, or U.S. Attorney's Office lawyer assigned to the case.

This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers, employees, agents, or any other person.

From: Witt, Ryan C.

Sent: Friday, April 16, 2010 4:53 PM

To: Bennett, Tanya Cc: Miller, Margaret A. Subject: FW: OPM FOIA

Ryan C. Witt FOIA Coordinator Office of Personnel Management (202) 606-3642

----Original Message-----

From: Skladany, Jon [mailto:Jon.Skladany@mail.house.gov]

Sent: Friday, April 16, 2010 4:41 PM

To: Witt, Ryan C. Cc: Bennett, Tanya Subject: RE: OPM FOIA

Hi Ryan,

That is correct – for request 2, please list the exemption cited in each case a FOIA request was denied in full or in part. For request 3, do <u>not</u> gather the response letters to requesters and provide them to us. If there are any records or communications (such as FOIA office memoranda or other written instructions) that address rejecting FOIA requests generally, please do provide those. If not, the info provided for request 2 will be sufficient to respond to request 3.

Let me know if you have any other questions.

Thanks,

Jon

From: Witt, Ryan C. [mailto:Ryan.Witt@opm.gov]

Sent: Friday, April 16, 2010 4:06 PM

To: Skladany, Jon **Cc:** Bennett, Tanya **Subject:** FW: OPM FOIA

Mr. Skladany,

I am writing this email to follow up on the phone conversation we had Wednesday April 14th. I was wondering if you could provide us with the written confirmation of our conversation. We agreed that OPM would provide a listing of the exemptions used in our partial and full releases under sections 2 and 3 of the committee's inquiry.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Ryan C. Witt FOIA Coordinator Office of Personnel Management (202) 606-3642

Attachment 3

This attachment contains three documents to address the Committee's inquiry about records and communications referring to the implementation of the President's memorandum of January 21, 2009, on openness and Attorney General Holder's memorandum of March 19, 2009, on the FOIA. The documents are:

- 1. An email sent by the OPM FOIA Public Liaison on April 17, 2009, to all of OPM's FOIA points of contact about how to act under a presumption of openness under the Administration's guidelines.
- 2. Attorney General Holder's memorandum to heads of executive departments and agencies addressing President Obama's memorandum on openness. The OPM FOIA Public Liaison sent a copy of it with the email of April 17, 20009, described above to all OPM FOIA points of contact.
- 3. A PowerPoint training slide provided by the Department of Justice and disseminated by the OPM FOIA Public Liaison to all OPM FOIA coordinators in the email of April 17, 2009, described above.

Attachment 2

Table 1: The number of times Exemptions 1 through 9 of the FOIA were used by OPM in FY2009 for full or partial denial

	Ex.	Ex.	Ex. 3	Ex. 4	Ex. 5	Ex. 6	Ex. 7(A)	Ex. 7(B)	Ex. 7(C)	Ex. 7(D)	Ex. 7(E)	Ex. 7(F)	Ex. 8	Ex. 9
Agency Overall	4	6	1	11	5	30	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 2: The number of times OPM granted a full or partial denial under the FOIA in FY2009 and the number of times OPM withheld information in full for reasons other than Exemptions 1 through 9 of the FOIA.

-	Number of Partial Grants/ Partial Denials	Number of Times OPM Withheld Information in Full for Reasons Other Than Exemptions 1-9 of FOIA									
		No Records	All Records Referred to Another Component or Agency	Request Withdrawn	Fee- Related Reason	Records Not Reasonably Described	Improper FOIA Request for Other Reason	Not Agency Record	Duplicate Request	Other	
Agency Overall	62	22	13	64	8	5	15	25	16	29	

Attachment 2

Exemptions Used for Full and Partial Denials

This attachment contains two tables, as follows:

Table 1: The number of times Exemptions 1 through 9 of the FOIA were used by OPM in FY2009 for full or partial denial.

Table 2: The number of times OPM granted a full or partial denial under the FOIA in FY2009 and the number of times OPM withheld information in full for reasons other than Exemptions 1 through 9 of the FOIA.