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Description of document: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 2020

Requested date: 22-May-2022

Release date: 26-May-2022

Posted date: 21-November-2022

Source of document: Department of Veterans Affairs
Freedom of Information Act Services (005R1C)
811 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420
Fax: 202-632-7581
[Veteran Affairs FOIA Public Access \(PAL\) Website](#)

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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

810 Vermont Ave NW
Washington DC 20420
www.va.gov

05/26/2021

Via Email

This letter is the VA's initial agency decision (IAD) regarding your May 22, 2022, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The Office of Information and Technology (OI&T) received this request and assigned it FOIA tracking number **22-05934-F**. For the reasons outlined below, your request is granted in full.

Initial Request

On May 22, 2022, you submitted a FOIA request for:

"A copy of each (internal) FOIA Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) at the Department of Veterans Affairs Central FOIA Office. Please apply the foreseeable harm test, and discretionary release of what might otherwise be considered records exempt under b(5), and the presumption of openness."

Requester Category & Fees

Please be aware that the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (A)(4)(a)(II), places all FOIA requesters in one of three categories for fee purposes. The three categories of FOIA requesters are 1) commercial use requesters; 2) educational institutions, noncommercial scientific institutions, and representatives of the news media; and finally, 3) all requesters "all other" who do not fall within either of the preceding two categories.

We have determined your request to be an "**All Other**" request. Our determination to classify this request as an all other request is based on the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 and VA FOIA regulations found at 38 C.F.R §1.561.

No fees were estimated/ charged for your request.

Search

On May 27, 2021, VA FOIA Service conducted a comprehensive search of the responsive documents. We found one (1) document totaling twenty-seven (27) pages.

Relevant Law

We have thoroughly reviewed your submission under the provisions of the FOIA, which provides that federal agencies must disclose records requested unless they may be withheld in accordance with one or more of nine statutory exemptions. 5 U.S.C. § 552(b).

Analysis

By way of background, you initially submitted a FOIA request to the VA FOIA Service. On May 26, 2022, we conducted a comprehensive search of the responsive documents. We found one (1) document totaling twenty-seven (27) pages. This document is being released to you in full under FOIA. See enclosure.

Decision

In light of the foregoing, we believe the efforts taken to locate the information were sufficient to satisfy the duty of the Department under the FOIA to conduct a reasonable search and review of the requested records. Accordingly, we are granting your request in its entirety and releasing one (1) document totaling twenty-seven (27) pages to you in full.

Mediation and Appeal Rights

Please be advised that you may appeal the response to:

Office of the General Counsel (024)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420
Email: ogcfoiaappeals@va.gov

If you should choose to file an appeal, your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted no later than ninety (90) calendar days from the date of this letter. Please include a copy of this letter with your written appeal and clearly state why you disagree with the determinations set forth in this response.

In addition to filing an appeal with the Office of General Counsel regarding this determination, you may also seek assistance and/or dispute resolution services regarding your FOIA request from VA's FOIA Public Liaison and or Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) as provided below:

VA FOIA Public Liaison:
Director, VA FOIA Service
810 Vermont Avenue, NW (005R1C)
Washington, DC 20420

E-mail: vacofoiaservice@va.gov
Telephone: 1-877-750-3642
Facsimile: 202-632-7581

Office of Government Information Services
National Archives and Records Administration
Room 2510
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001

E-mail: ogis@nara.gov
Telephone: 202-741-5770
Facsimile: 202-741-5769
Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448

Pg. 3

This concludes the FOIA Service's response to your request. We appreciate your interest in the VA. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact me at (202) 322-3652.

Sincerely,

Jalil A. Riahi
1067881
VACO FOIA Officer

Digitally signed by
Jalil A. Riahi 1067881
Date: 2022.05.26
11:31:17 -04'00'

Enclosure: 27 pages released in full.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)

10/20/2020 | Department of Veterans Affairs- Veterans Affairs
Central Office
Office of Information and Technology (OI&T)
Quality, Performance, and Risk (QPR)
VACO FOIA Service (005R1C)

FOIA STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)
FOR THE VETERANS AFFAIRS CENTRAL OFFICE

FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY

Office of Information and Technology

★★★★★

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1. Introduction

FOIA is a law that gives the public the right, to obtain access to federal agency records. The Public can request access to agency records regardless of citizenship, to include; individuals, corporations, associations, state and local governments, and foreign governments, except to the extent that such records (or portions of them) are protected from public disclosure by one of nine exemptions or by one of three special law enforcement record exclusions.

2. Request Intake

- Upon receipt, the FOIA Officer date stamps the initial requests (IR) with the date received at the FOIA Office.
- The FOIA Officer differentiates the type of request i.e., FOIA or Privacy Act.
- The FOIA Officer analyzes requests, determines which office may have responsive documents, and requests the responsive records for review and processing.
- FOIA Officers are responsible for opening cases and creating tracking numbers in FOIAXpress, which is VA's official system of record FOIA tracking system.

*Note: Privacy Act Requests are not uploaded into FOIAXpress and are not tracked by a case number.

3. Creating a Request

- Use the tool bar at the top of your home page to select Requests>Create Request.



- When creating the request in FOIAXpress, FOIA Officers must first search the requesters profile to see if they have an existing account *this reduces duplicate requests*.
- Search/Create the requester by clicking the blue box to the right of the requester field.

- Input information the requester provided in request and click search.

Search Requesters

Search Requesters Create Requester

Search Criteria Wild-card searches (*) are supported

First Name: *
Last Name: *
Organization: *
Category: Select Category
Delinquent: ☐ N/A ☐ No ☐ Yes
Email Address: *
City: *
Country: United States
State: All
PAL Requester: ☐ N/A ☐ No ☐ Yes

+ Custom Fields

Search Clear Close

- If the requester DOES have an existing account, FOIA Officers have the option to add/edit information to the profile.
- If nothing to add/edit, FOIA Officers select the requester's profile and begin creating a request.
- If the requester does NOT have an existing profile, select "create requester" and create a new requester account.

Home >> Create Requester Note: * fields are mandatory

Create Requester

Personal Information Contact Information

Prefix:
First Name*:
Middle Name:
Last Name*:
Suffix:
Job Title:
Home Phone:
Work Phone1:
Work Phone2:
Mobile:
Fax:
Email:

General Information

Organization: Category:

Address

Address 1:
Address 2:
City:
Country*: United States
State: Select a State
ZIP Code: [12345 or 12345-6789 format for US]

- Input the requester's information in the required fields and click save. (The more information you input the easier it will be for the processing officer to contact the requester).

- Select the requester's "Category" (News Media, Commercial, Other,...) in the Category dropdown box.

Requester Details

Requester*: Organization:

Category*: On Behalf Of:

+ Address Details

+ Other Address Details

Request Details

Action Office*:

Request Type*:

Received Mode*:

Multi-Track Type*:

Requested Date*:

Received Date*:

Primary Assigned*:

Priority*:

Delivery Mode*:

Method of Payment*:

- Select the responsible "Action Office" for processing and referrals.
- Select the request type (FOIA, FOIA/PA, Consultation, Privacy Act, Referral, or TEST).
- Select Received Mode (Email, Fax, Mail, PAL etc..).
- Select the Multi Track type (Simple, Complex, or Expedite).
- Input the date the request was received to your office.
- Input the date the request was requested, *keep in mind these dates might be different*.

+ Other Address Details

Request Details

Action Office*:

Request Type*:

Received Mode*:

Multi-Track Type*:

Requested Date*:

Received Date*:

Primary Assigned*:

Priority*:

Delivery Mode*:

Method of Payment*:

- Add Request Description.
- On the right side of your request description box, upload the PDF copy of your request for reference.

Description*

☐ Restricted

Date Range for Record Search: From To

Notes: Only Incoming Request Letters are Searchable Attachments.

Selecting the "Restricted" checkbox will replace the field content in all the reports with '<<Restricted>>'.

Drag and Drop Zone

Incoming Request Letter(s):

- If there are any requests that have been previously requested by this requester that may have the same subject matter or that may be responsive to any future request from the selected requester you will add them under the “Sub Request” tab below your description box.
- Select Responsible Facility that will be processing the request (VBA, VHA, VACO, OIT, OAWP etc.).

Responsible Facilities

Facility* : VACO – O&T – Office of Information and Technology (005)

Request Category

- Select the Request Category *this is different than the Requester Category*.
- You may select more than one category
- If request is determined Substantial Interest select that category in addition to any other category

Request Category

Categories* : 9. All Others

Expedite Requested ☐ Yes ☒ No

Fee Waiver Requested ☐ Yes ☒ No

Fee Details

Willing Amount* \$:

+ Link Request(s)

Comments

☒ 9. All Others

- Select if the request is to be expedited *usually stated in the request*.
- Select if the requester is granted a “Fee Waiver” * the fee request will also be stated in the request*.
- In the request, the requester should address their willingness to pay fees and the desired amount, if this is not stated please place request on hold and contact requester about their willingness to pay. Select Yes/No if stated and the amount.

Fee Details

Willing Amount* \$: ☐ Willing to Pay All Fees

+ Link Request(s)

Comments

- Input any comments, suggestions, or annotations you may have and want to pass along to the processing analyst. *add your initials and date*.

- Save and continue to assign the request to the processing FOIA Officer.

4. Assign Request

- Once a case is created and perfected, the case is then assigned to a FOIA Officers.

The screenshot shows the 'Request Information' sidebar on the left. Two items are highlighted with red boxes: 'Assign Users' and 'Set Perfect Status'. The main content area shows 'Requester Details' with fields for 'Requester' (Yob, Josephr), 'Organization', 'Category' (All Other), and 'On Behalf Of'. There are also sections for 'Address Details' and 'Other Address Details'.

4.1. Assign within office:

- Select Primary User to assign the request to.

The screenshot shows the 'Assign Users' section. It has a sidebar on the left with various options like 'Request Information', 'Assign Users', 'Correspondence', etc. The main area is titled 'Request Owner' and 'Primary User'. Both sections show the current user as 'admin, admin' and have a dropdown menu to change the user. The 'Primary User' section also has a 'Send Email Notification' checkbox. Below these is a 'Secondary Users' table with columns for Name, Type, Group Name, Office, Email, Send Email?, and Action. The table lists 'admin, admin' as a user in the 'Admin' group at 'HQ' with email 'QA2@ains.com'. At the bottom, there is an 'Assignment Note' field and an 'Assign' button highlighted with a red box.

Name	Type	Group Name	Office	Email	Send Email?	Action
admin, admin	User	Admin	HQ	QA2@ains.com	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4.2. Assign to a different office:

- If the request needs to be assigned a different office, then select Transfer Request.

Request Information

Transfer Request

Current Action Office of this Request is OIT

New Action Office* :

Transfer Date* : 10/20/2020 (Received Date of new Action Office)

New Target Date :

Comments* :

☐ Generate New Request Number
☐ Send Email to Primary User
☒ Assign Request

Spell Check Transfer

- Select the appropriate office and click transfer.

Request Information

Transfer Request

Current Action Office of this Request is OIT

New Action Office* :

Transfer Date* : 10/20/2020 (Received Date of new Action Office)

New Target Date : 11/18/2020

Comments* :

☐ Generate New Request Number
☐ Send Email to Primary User
☒ Assign Request

Spell Check Transfer

- Click the ... icon to search/assign a FOIA Officer.

Request Information

Assign Users

Primary User

Current Primary User of this Request is Riahi, Jalil

Change the Primary User for the request to : ☒ Send Email Notification

Secondary Users

Add Users Add Groups Add Group Quizzes

Name	Type	Group Name	Office	Email	Send Email?	Action
Riahi, Jalil	User	OIT - Read/Write	Office of Informa...	jalil.riahi@va.gov	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Assignment Note: (will be included in assignment email notification)

Attach Request Report (PDF) to the Email notification sent to the assignees

Assign

- Select the new Action Office.

Search Criteria Wild card searches (*) are supported

Personal Information

First Name : *
Last Name : *
Email : *

User Information

Login : *
Action Office : **OIT**
Group : *

Advanced

AND	Field	Operator	Value
X AND	Include Queue Users	=	Both Queue Users

Users

Last Name	First Name	Group Name	Action Office	Active
Brown	Barbara	FX Admin	OIT	Yes
Buck	John	FX Admin	OIT	Yes
Carr	Melodie	OIT - Read	OIT	Yes

- Search/select new FOIA Officer.

Search Criteria Wild card searches (*) are supported

Personal Information

First Name : *
Last Name : *
Email : *

User Information

Login : *
Action Office : **OAL**
Group : *

Advanced

AND	Field	Operator	Value
X AND	Include Queue Users	=	Both Queue Users

Users

Last Name	First Name	Group Name	Action Office	Active	Login Status	Created Date
Quire	OAL PPS - Read/...	OAL PPS - Read/...	OAL	Yes	N/A	04/09/2009
Quire	OAL PPS - Read	OAL PPS - Read	OAL	Yes	N/A	04/09/2009
Quire	OAL PPS - Read	OAL PPS - Read	OAL	Yes	logged in	10-25-2009
Quire	OAL (TAC) - Read	OAL (TAC) - Read	OAL	Yes	N/A	05/06/2010
Quire	OAL (TAC) - Read	OAL (TAC) - Read	OAL	Yes	N/A	05/06/2010
Simpson-Jones	Parrie	OAL PPS - Read/...	OAL	Yes	Not Logged In	07/11/2013
Webster	Chadwick	OAL PPS - Read/...	PSI	Yes	logged in	06/04/2010

- Remove yourself as Secondary User and check Send Email Notification box.

Request Information

Assign Users

Set Perfect Status

Correspondence

Request for Documents (0/0)

Electronic Document Review (0/0)

Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)

Fees/Billing

Final Actions

Deliver Documents

Stop the Clock

Primary User

Current Primary User of this Request is **Riahi, Jalil**

Change the Primary User for the request to: **Ellis, Kristen** ☒ Send Email Notification

Secondary Users

Name	Type	Group Name	Office	Email	Send Email?	Action
Ellis, Kristen	User	OAL PPS - Read/...	OAL	kristen.ellis@va.gov	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Riahi, Jalil	User	OIT - Read/Write	Office of Informa...	jail.riahi@va.gov	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Assignment Note: (will be included in assignment email notification)

☐ Attach Request Report (PDF) to the Email notification sent to the assignees

Assign

- Click Assign.

Request Information

Assign Users

Set Perfect Status

Correspondence

Request for Documents (0/0)

Electronic Document Review (0/0)

Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)

Fees/Billing

Final Actions

Deliver Documents

Primary User

Current Primary User of this Request is **Riahi, Jalil**

Change the Primary User for the request to:

Secondary Users

Name	Type	Group Name	Office	Email	Send Email?	Action
Ellis, Kristen	User	ORL-PPS - Read/...	CAL	kristen.ellis@va.gov	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="button" value="Assign"/>

Assignment Note: (will be included in assignment email notification)

☐ Attach Request Report (PDF) to the Email notification sent to the assignees

- Click Yes to confirm selection.

Request Information

Assign Users

Set Perfect Status

Correspondence

Request for Documents (0/0)

Electronic Document Review (0/0)

Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)

Fees/Billing

Final Actions

Deliver Documents

Primary User

Current Primary User of this Request is **Riahi, Jalil**

Change

Secondary User

Assignment Note: (will be included in assignment email notification)

☐ Attach Request Report (PDF) to the Email notification sent to the assignees

Confirm Assignment

Would you like to save your assignment selections?

5. FOIA Fees

- FOIA Officers determine and calculate fee estimates, as necessary.
- If a request is not reasonably described or not specific enough to determine the nature of the request, the FOIA Officer drafts a clarification letter or contacts the requester to seek clarification, narrow the scope of the request, and perfect the request.
- Uniform fee schedule prescribed by OMB.
- Sets search, review and duplication costs based on identity of the requester.
- Provision for fee waivers.
- Must resolve fee matters prior to processing and closing.

6. FOIA Processing Time

- Processing times outlined in statute.
- 20 working days.
- 10 additional days for "unusual circumstances".
- Requests that contain over 5000 responsive records may be extended.

7. Acknowledgment of Request

- FOIA Officers draft acknowledgment letters advising requesters of receipt, intent to process, and requester's category.
- FOIA Officers collect and review records, and determine what information is released and what is withheld/ redacted under applicable FOIA exemptions prior to final response to the requester.
- If the request is a consult request from a different Agency, the FOIA Officer will; determine which VA Administration may be able to respond to the consult or referred documents. If reviewing responsive documents and the Agency determines the records contain equities from another Agency, the FOIA Officer will refer the records to that Agency for consultation and release of the records.
- After letters are signed and dated, FOIA Officers input all information and upload all administrative file (i.e., IR, acknowledgment letter, clarification letter, ...) into FOIAXpress tracking database. Save entire working copy of administrative file (emails, all correspondence and communications, IR, acknowledgment letter, ...) for your records.
- Open the case and click Correspondence.

FOIA - Request: 21-00267-F Remaining Days: 20 Status: Assigned

Request Information

- Assign Users
- Set Perfect Status
- Correspondence**
- Request for Documents (0/0)
- Electronic Document Review (0/0)
- Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)
- Fees/Billing

Requester Details

Requester: Antikayote, Nancy Organization: World/istA

Category: All Other On Behalf Of:

+ Address Details

+ Other Address Details

Request Details

Action Office: OIT Request Type: FOIA Primary Assigned: Rich, Sali

Received Mode: Letter Priority: Normal

- Go to Receive Correspondence.

FOIA - Request: 21-00267-F Remaining Days: 20 Status: Assigned

Request Information

- Assign Users
- Set Perfect Status
- Correspondence**
- Request for Documents (0/0)
- Electronic Document Review (0/0)
- Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)
- Fees/Billing
- Final Actions

Send Correspondence **Receive Correspondence** **Correspondence Log**

Name	Source	Size	Delete
There are no attachments.			

Add From

- Letter Template
- Pending Letter (0)
- Disk
- Scanner
- Correspondence Log
- Invoice Log
- Print Requester Address

- Click drop down Subject.

FOIA - Request: 21-00267-F Remaining Days: 20 Status: **Assigned** NEXT >

Request Information
 Assign Users
 Set Perfect Status
Correspondence
 Request for Documents (0/0)
 Electronic Document Review (0/0)
 Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)
 Fees/Billing
 Final Actions

Send Correspondence **Receive Correspondence** **Correspondence Log**

Attachments added from online request submission cannot be overridden.

Receive Correspondence

Letter Template: Other
 Subject: [Empty]
 Received Mode: [Empty]

Drag and Drop Zone

Scan File
 Attach File
 Print Barcode

- Select the appropriate Subject.

FOIA - Request: 21-00267-F Remaining Days: 20 Status: **Assigned** NEXT >

Request Information
 Assign Users
 Set Perfect Status
Correspondence
 Request for Documents (0/0)
 Electronic Document Review (0/0)
 Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)
 Fees/Billing

Send Correspondence **Receive Correspondence** **Correspondence Log**

Attachments added from online request submission cannot be overridden.

Receive Correspondence

Letter Template: Other
 Subject: [Empty]
 Received Mode: Classification Letter

Case Modification Letter
 Fee Acceptance Letter
 Fee Decline Letter
 Requester Update Information
 Withdrawal Letter

Drag and Drop Zone

Attach File
 Print Barcode

- Attach your file (or drag and drop).

FOIA - Request: 21-00267-F Remaining Days: 20 Status: **Assigned** NEXT >

Request Information
 Assign Users
 Set Perfect Status
Correspondence
 Request for Documents (0/0)
 Electronic Document Review (0/0)
 Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)
 Fees/Billing
 Final Actions

Send Correspondence **Receive Correspondence** **Correspondence Log**

Attachments added from online request submission cannot be overridden.

Receive Correspondence

Letter Template: Other
 Subject: [Empty]
 Received Mode: [Empty]

Drag and Drop Zone

Scan File
Attach File
 Print Barcode

Save

- Click Correspondence Log to confirm your documents have been uploaded and saved.

FOIA - Request: 21-00267-F Remaining Days: 20 Status: **Assigned** **Next**

Request Information
Assign Users
Set Perfect Status
Correspondence
Request for Documents (0/0)
Electronic Document Review (0/0)
Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)

Send Correspondence Receive Correspondence **Correspondence Log**

Correspondence cannot be 'Edited' from this log. To edit correspondence go to Correspondence > Send Correspondence.

Subject	File Name	User	Status	Mode	Email	Dispatched Date	Action Date
Request Description	21-00267-F Req (Anthr...	Short, Jackie	Received	E-mail		10/13/2020 11:58:29 A	

Page size: 20 1 items in 1 page

Download Resend Email Details Delete Change Dispatch Date Edit Subject Redact Refresh

- Once records have been received, the FOIA Officer will conduct a line by line review and redaction of the records under FOIA.
- Once the records have been reviewed, processed, and a determination is made, FOIA Officers draft an Initial Agency Decision (IAD) in response to the request.

8. Tag Records

- Upload documents to Add/Search/View Documents (FOIA personnel that have EDR feature add to EDR)

Request Information
Assign Users
Set Perfect Status
Correspondence
Request for Documents (0/0)
Electronic Document Review (1/1)
Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)
Fees/Billing
Final Actions
Deliver Documents
Stop the Clock
Notes (2)

Requester Details
Requester*: Alexander / Bog
Category*: Other
Organization*:
On Behalf Of*:
[Spell Check] [Save]

Address Details
Shipping Address
Address 1: 785 Maple Ridge Way
Address 2:
City: Rockville
Country*: United States
State: Maryland
ZIP Code: 20850
[12345 or 12345-6789 format for US]

Billing Address
Address 1: 785 Maple Ridge Way
Address 2:
City: Rockville
Country*: United States
State: Maryland
ZIP Code: 20850
[12345 or 12345-6789 format for US]

Request Details
Action Office*: RO4
Request Type*: FOIA
Request Owner*: Gaither, Langston
Primary Assigned*: Gaither, Langston
Document*: [Select]

- When redacting a FOIA request, FOIA Officers tag pages that do not have any redactions.

Add to Review Log
Add to Request Folder
Add to Review List
Tagging
Export
Compare
Containment Compare

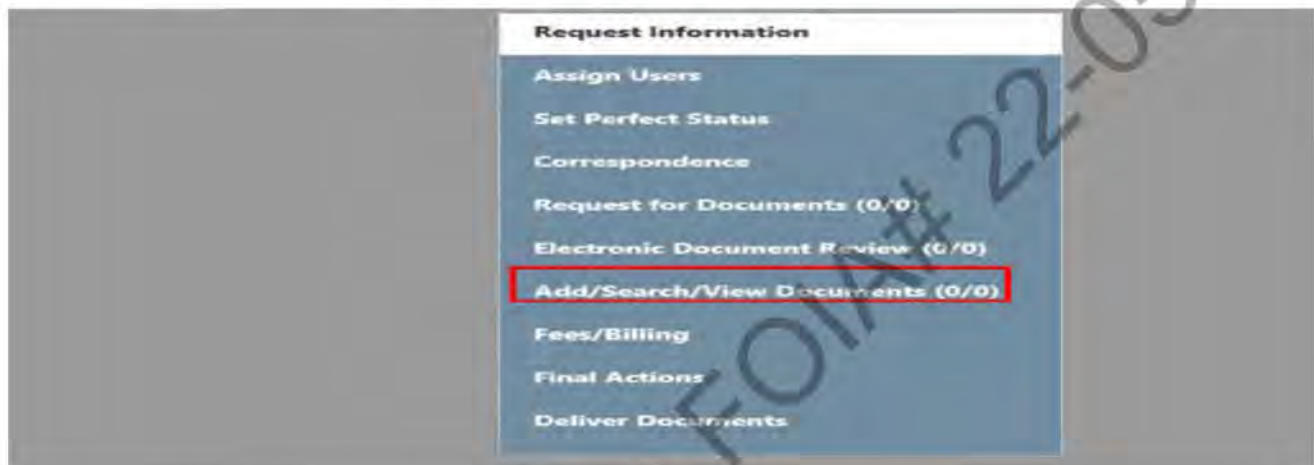
Data Sources

<input type="checkbox"/>	Tagging	Doc ID	Sent/Last Modified Date	Name	Dup	Cont	Size
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		75610	5/2/2012 1:48:15 AM	RE: Gluten Free Kansas City	0		8 KB
<input type="checkbox"/>		75613	5/2/2012 2:01:52 AM	RE: Gluten Free Kansas City	0		11 KB

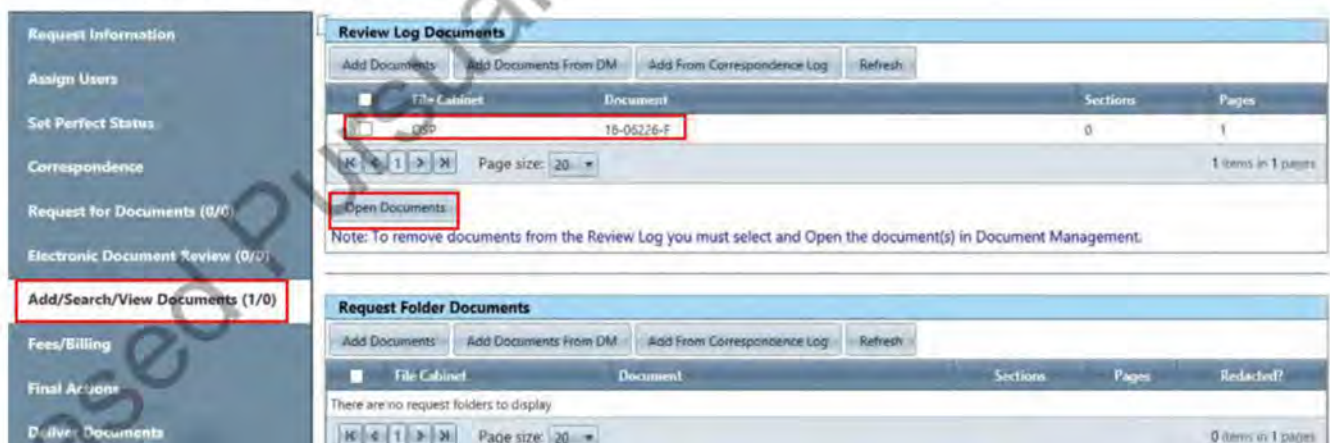
-
- Review Log Documents**
- Add Documents Add Documents From DM Add From Correspondence Log Refresh
- | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | File Cabinet | Document | Sections | Pages |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|------------|----------|-------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | VHA | 19-00000-1 | 1 | 1 |
- K < 1 > N Page size: 100 1 items in 1 pages
- Open Documents**
- Note: To remove documents from the Review Log you must select and Open the document(s) in Document Management.

9. Redact Records

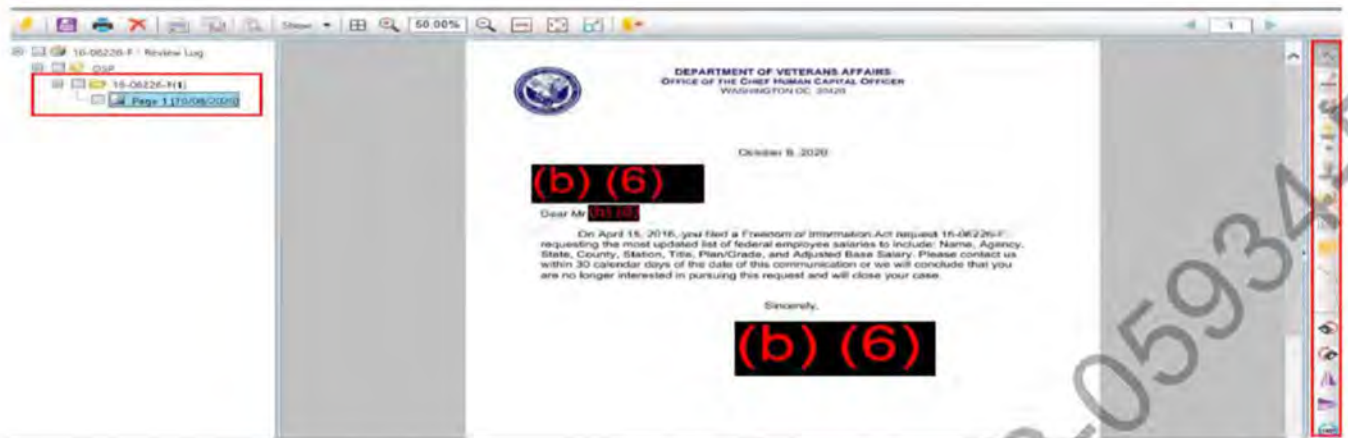
- Once the responsive records are received, click the “Add/Search/View Documents” tab located on the left-hand toolbar. If responsive records were sent via mail, email or document management you will also use this section to attach files from your PC or Scan in. The Add/View/Search is where all folders and sections will be organized, and documents uploaded.
- Once a request for records has been sent to responding departments, you can see the number of offices you sent a request to and how many of those offices have responded with documents, click the parenthesis (2/2).



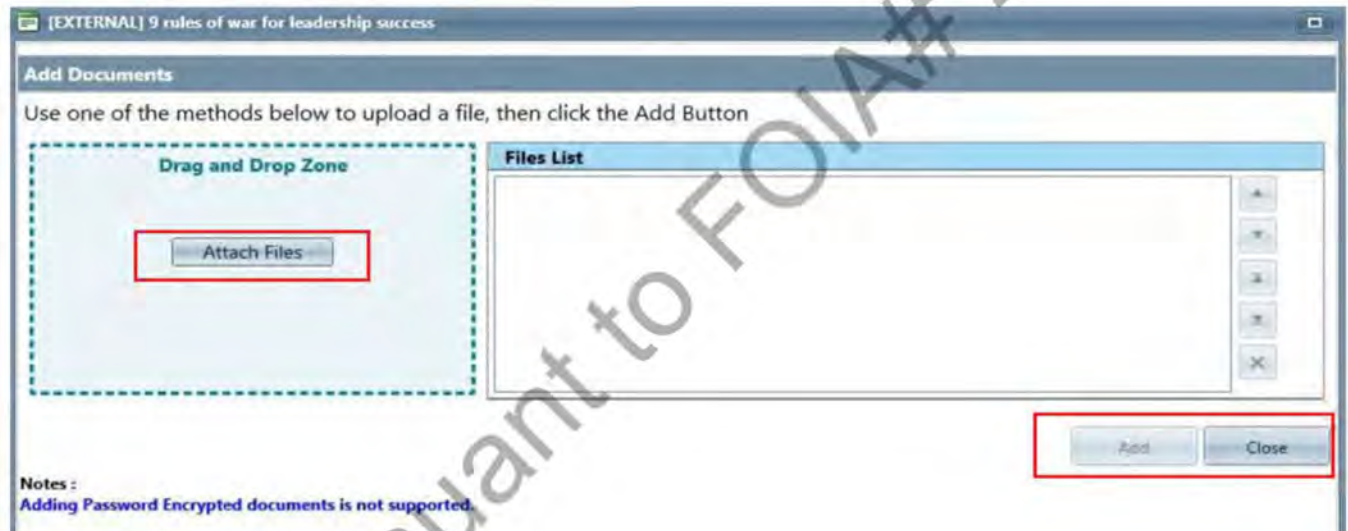
- Select the folder that has the records you would like to review and click “Open Documents” *this is also where you can move your final review to the request folder when closing the request*



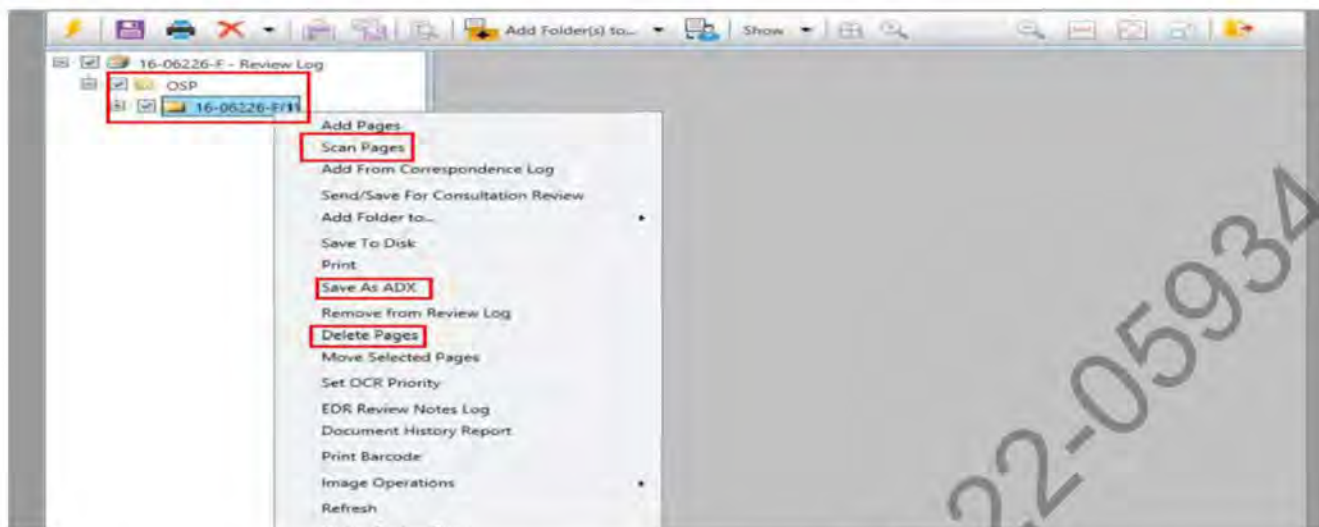
- Once FOIA Officers have selected and opened documents in document review mode, FOIA Officers can redact, review and mark up all responsive documents with exemptions, bates stamps, print, and save documents etc.



- To upload additional documents to folders for review, click the desired folder, click "Add Pages>Attach file>Save>Close.



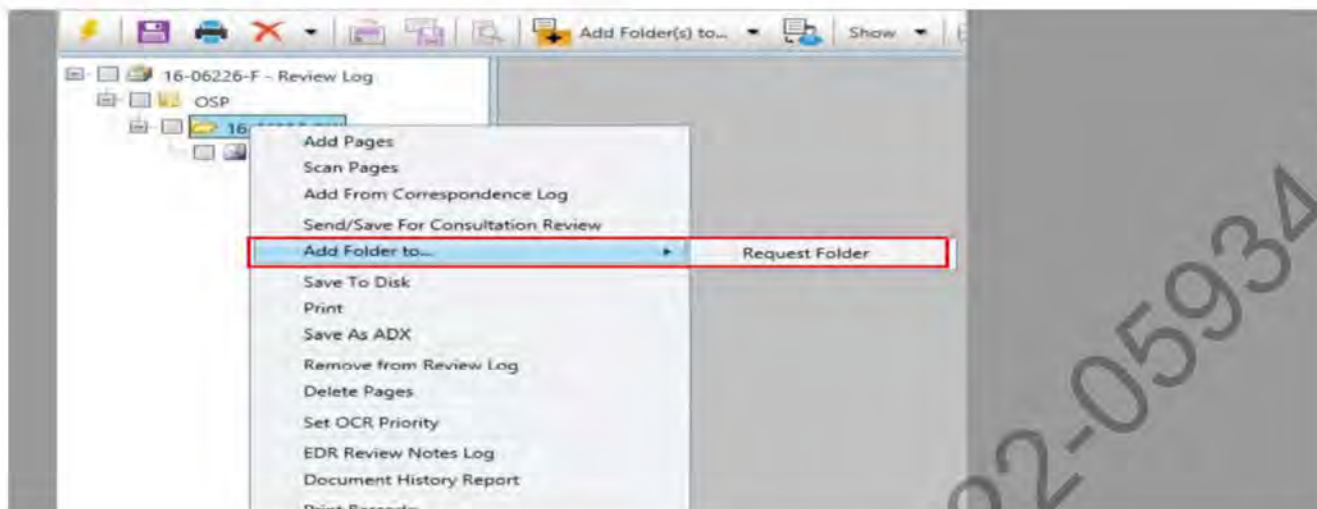
- Right click your document folder for a page by page view and additional review tools and functions



- Use the right-hand tool bar to see your main tool for review the “redact tool”, here is where you will also find your other review tools such as, comment boxes, rotate, straight line functions and more.
- Click the redacting tool on the right toolbar and begin to trace a box over any information or keywords that may be non-releasable.
- Once the redaction box is traced a list of exemption codes will pop up to choose from and apply. * Set default exemption codes if your office commonly uses the same codes. *
- You will use your upper left toolbar for saving documents to a disk, printing etc.



- Once all records have been reviewed and are ready for final action, select all folders and sections that are complete.
- Right click the folder and add documents to the “Request Folder”. * Once documents have been moved to the request folder, no edits or redactions can be made; documents will have to be moved back to the “Review Log” for any changes. *



- Once the records have been reviewed, final actions processed, and a determination is made, FOIA Officers draft an Initial Agency Decision (IAD) in response to the request.

10. Label Records

- Label your review sections/folders based on its content, i.e. Photos, Memo, emails, congressional, ...
- Labeling documents within FOIAXpress while adding pages will help all processing analyst find and review desired documents. This also is important for all appeals and litigations record retention.

11. Close Request

- FOIA Officers close cases in FOIAXpress accordingly.
- Once the case has been perfected and all documents uploaded, go to Final Actions.

- Double click on the description under Request Description.

Correspondence

Request for Documents (0/0)

Electronic Document Review (0/0)

Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)

Fees/Billing

Final Actions

Deliver Documents

Close Request

Stop the Clock

Received Date : 08/17/2020

Target Date : 11/10/2020

Disposition Accepted Date* : 10/13/2020

Perfected : Yes

Reportable Disposition* : Other Reasons

Reportable Other Code* : Administratively Closed - Administratively C

Multi-Track Type* : Simple

Note: Update each Disposition listed below as TBD to calculate the Reportable Disposition.

Request Descriptions Double-click on each line item to update the 'TBD' action.

Description	Disposition	Action Date
Administratively Closed - Administratively Closed		

Other Codes Applied

Administratively Closed - Administratively Closed

➤ Click the Final Disposition drop down menu.

Home Requesters

Default - Final Action - 20-09746-F

Action Date* : 10/13/2020

Final Disposition* : Select Final Disposition

Notes

Note: * fields are mandatory

Spell Check Save Cancel

Next

Note: * fields are mandatory

Final Disposition

➤ Select a Disposition.

Home Requesters

Default - Final Action - 20-09746-F

Action Date* : 10/13/2020

Final Disposition* : Select Final Disposition

Notes

Note: * fields are mandatory

Spell Check Save Cancel

Next

Note: * fields are mandatory

Final Disposition

Other Reasons

11.1. Other Reasons.

Home Requesters Default - Final Action - 20-09746-F

Action Date: 10/13/2020 Final Disposition: Other Reasons

Exemption/Exclusion Codes

Code	Description
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D(1)	No records
<input type="checkbox"/> D(2)	Records referred to other agency
<input type="checkbox"/> D(3)	Request withdrawn
<input type="checkbox"/> D(4)	Fee-related reason
<input type="checkbox"/> D(5)	Records not reasonably described
<input type="checkbox"/> D(6)	Not a proper FOIA request for some other reason
<input type="checkbox"/> D(7)	Not an agency record
<input type="checkbox"/> D(8)	Duplicate Request
<input type="checkbox"/> Requestor Died	Requestor died before request was completed
<input type="checkbox"/> Glomar Response	Glomar Response
<input type="checkbox"/> Subsumed by Litigation	Subsumed by Litigation

Notes

11.2. Denied in Full and Granted/Denied in Part.

Home Requesters Default - Final Action - 20-09746-F

Action Date: 10/13/2020 Final Disposition: Granted/Denied in Part

Exemption/Exclusion Codes

Code	Description
<input type="checkbox"/> (b)(2)	Permits withholding of records related solely to rules and practices.
<input type="checkbox"/> (b)(1)	Permits withholding information that is classified for national security purposes.
<input type="checkbox"/> (b)(3)	Permits withholding of records or information if a law specifically exempts the material from disclosure.
<input type="checkbox"/> (b)(4)	Permits withholding of records related to trade secrets and other confidential business information.
<input type="checkbox"/> (b)(5)	Permits withholding of information under the deliberative process privilege, including the pre-decisional documents, or information that could be withheld under civil discovery, attorney-client, or attorney-work product privileges.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (b)(6)	Permits withholding of records and information about individuals when disclosure would be a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.
<input type="checkbox"/> (b)(7)(A)	Permits withholding of records when interference with law enforcement proceedings can be reasonably expected.
<input type="checkbox"/> (b)(7)(B)	Permits withholding of records when a person would be deprived of a fair trial or an impartial adjudication.

Notes

➤ Select Multi-Track Type and save.

FOIA - Request: 20-08924-F Remaining Days: 20 Status: Disposition Accepted

Request Information

Assign Users

Correspondence

Request for Documents (0/0)

Electronic Document Review (0/0)

Add/Search/View Documents (0/0)

Fees/Billing

Final Actions

Deliver Documents

Disposition

Requested Date: 08/14/2020 FOIApress Calculated Disposition: Other Reasons

Received Date: 08/17/2020 Reportable Disposition: Other Reasons

Target Date: 11/10/2020 Reportable Other Code: Administratively Closed - Administratively Closed

Disposition Accepted Date: 10/13/2020 Multi-Track Type: Simple

Perfected: Yes

Note: Update each Disposition listed below as TBD to calculate the Reportable Disposition.

Request Descriptions

Double-click on each line item to update the 'TBD' action.

Description	Disposition	Action Date
I am seeking all Memorandum that are current COVID 19	Other Reasons	10/13/2020

Other Codes Applied

➤ Close Request and select date.

Organization : -

Fee Waiver : N/A

Balance Due : \$ 0.00

Received Date : 8/17/2020

Disposition Accepted Date : 10/13/2020

Closed Date* :

Final Disposition : Other Reasons

Review Status :

Multi-Track Type : Simple

Number of Pages Released* : Generated Count : 0

Number of Pages Reviewed* : Generated Count : 0

Close Request

- Associated Fees (if no fees select No).

Request Close

No fees has been associated to this request.
 - If fees should be applied for this request, then click on 'Yes'.
 - If fees should not be applied for this request, then click on 'No'.

Yes No

Final Disposition : Other Reasons

Review Status :

Multi-Track Type : Simple

Number of Pages Released* : Generated Count : 0

Number of Pages Reviewed* : Generated Count : 0

Notes

- Request Confirmation.

Close Request Confirmation

Closing this request will not permit you to perform any further actions except Assign Request, Amend Request, View Request Folder, Payments or Create an Appeal. Multi-track type is set to Simple. If it needs to be changed prior to closing this request click 'No' in message below and return to the request Information tab to make the change. Are you sure you want to Close the request?

Yes No

Multi-Track Type : Simple

Number of Pages Released* : Generated Count : 0

Number of Pages Reviewed* : Generated Count : 0

- FOIA Officers dispatch letters and provide appeal rights to the requester.

12. Consolidated Requests

- FOIA Officers triage and analyze requests to avoid duplication.
- If two or more requests are the same, the FOIA Officer will consolidate all requests into one and only create one FOIA case in FOIAXpress.
- FOIA Officers inform requester of this action in the acknowledgment letter.

13. FOIA Records

- Created or maintained by the agency and under agency control.
- Maintained by a contractor for purposes of agency records management.

14. Substantial Interest FOIA Requests

- A Substantial Interest (SI) FOIA request is a FOIA request where, in the component's judgment, the subject matter of the released documents may be of interest or potential interest to VA senior leadership. Any requests involving the current administration, previous administrations, Members of Congress (correspondence, calendars, travel, or otherwise), those related to a threat to the public health; requester or requested documents will garner media attention or is receiving media attention; request is for records associated with meetings with prominent elected, business, and/or community leaders; request is for congressional correspondence; request is from a member of the media; request is from a member of an advocacy group, watchdog organization, etc.; request is for records associated with a controversial or sensitive subject; or high profile local or national incidents or situations involving VA beneficiaries, employees or officials; and incidents involving an alleged breach of the public trust (e.g., waste, fraud, or abuse) or current or previous VA leadership would be included.
- When an FOIA request is submitted, the FOIA Officer will review the request to determine if the request contains SI equities based on the above criteria. If the request is determined to be an SI FOIA, the FOIA Officer will upload the request into the FX; after consultation with responsible FOIA Offices, assign to all FOIA offices that may have responsive records (each referral must have a separate FOIA case number assigned); notify their leadership of the SI request and, provide a copy of the request to the VACO FOIA Service for additional SI notifications. (When providing the copy of the request to the VACO FOIA Service, the FOIA Officer will identify all FOIA case numbers assigned to the request and the responsible office to which each case number is associated).
- Select SI in the Request Category drop down menu.

Notes: Only Incoming Request Letters are Searchable
Selecting the 'Restricted' checkbox will replace the file

Request Category

Facility*: []

Categories*: **10. Substantial Interest, 9. All Others**

Expedite Requested: ☐ Yes ☒ No

Print Barcode
21-00263-F Req (Base...)

- If a FOIA request is received directly by a field or regional FOIA office consult with the Administrations FOIA Officer for guidance. The Administration FOIA Officer will forward to the VACO FOIA Office for additional VACO FOIA notifications, if applicable.
- If the request is received by the VACO FOIA Office, they will acknowledge receipt of the SI FOIA request in an approved summary format and notify the referring component that a SI notification has been sent to VA Leadership. Additional notifications may be made by Administrations to their respective leadership chains based upon internal notification procedures. Administrations will be notified if additional documentation describing the request is needed.
- Send SI notification email memo to involved offices.
- Title email: SI FOIA Notification, (21-XXXXX-F).

Substantial Interest (SI) Notification Template:

To: VA FOIA SI Review

Subject: SI FOIA Notification, (FX tracking #)

Date received:

Attached to this email is a FOIA Request The details pertaining to this request are outlined below:

Who: [insert name of FOIA requester]

Affiliation: [insert organization such as ABC News]

What: Requesting the following:

Assigned/Referred VA FOIA Officer: [insert your name] (assigned program office)

Attachment: Attach a scanned dated copy of the request

Due date: 20 working days from date of request is perfected

15. FOIA Reports

- Go to Reports Tab.

Home Requesters Requests Document Management Administration **Reports** Request #

Home >> Requests View (Primary Assignments) >> 21-00267-F - Request

FOIA - Request: 21-00267-F Remaining Days: 18 Status: **Assigned**

Request Information

Assign Users

Set Perfect Status

Correspondence

Requester Details

Requester*: Anthracite, Nancy Organization: WorldV

Category*: All Other On Behalf Of:

Address Details

- Select the type of report.

Home Requesters Requests Document Management Administration **Reports** Request #

Home >> Reports

Annual Reports

Custom Reports

Billing Reports

Request Management Reports

Document Reports

Annual Reports

Annual

- Run report.

Annual Report

Generate Export Import Save Recalculate View Reading Room Refresh Spell Close

Select Report Type

☒ Agency Overall

☐ With Breakdown for each Action Office - Hierarchical Order

☐ With Breakdown for each Action Office - Alphabetical Order

☐ With Breakdown for First Tier Action Offices

☐ Overall Agency Totals Only

☐ Action Office

☐ Individual Action Office

☐ Overall Parent Action Office

☐ Parent Action Office with Breakdown for each Action Office

Action Office: HQ

Year Type

☒ Fiscal ☐ Calendar

Year: 2017

Date Range Type

16. Other Means of Disclosure

- Court order – ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES ARE NOT COURTS OF COMPETENT JURISDICTION- processed by Office of General Counsel.
- Congress – Oversight Committees/Members of sitting Congressional Committees
- Discovery – Disclosure governed by Federal Rules of Civil Procedure Discovery requests are processed by Office of General Counsel
- Media Requests – FOIA principles apply
- Touhy – litigation in which the Federal Government isn't a party
- Law enforcement requests – Drug Enforcement Administration, state licensing boards, etc.

17. FOIA Appeal Rights

17.1. FOIA.

- Failure to comply with time limits.
- Denial of fee waiver or expedited processing.
- Adequacy of search.
- Denial of information in full or part pursuant to an exemption.
- Process included in statute and implementing regulation.

17.2. Privacy Act.

- Denial of access: process established by agency regulation.
- Denial of amendment: process established by statute.

18. References

- DOJ/OIP FOIA Guide: <https://www.justice.gov/oip/doj-guide-freedom-information-act-0>
- DOJ/OPCL Privacy Act Guide: <https://www.justice.gov/opcl>
- OMB Privacy Act Guide: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/information-regulatory-affairs/privacy/>
- VA FOIA Webpage: <https://www.va.gov/FOIA/index.asp>
- VA Privacy Act Webpage: https://www.oprm.va.gov/privacy/about_privacy.aspx
- VA FOIA SharePoint Site contains FOIA Newsletter, FOIA Training, FOIAXpress Training, links to the VA FOIA website
<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/OITQPR/FOIA/Pages/FOIA-Home.aspx>
- FOIAXpress Training Manual: <https://ains.efoia-host.com/FOIAXpress/Help/WebHelp/Help.htm>