

FOIA Improvements

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Posted in group: FOIA Advisory Committee

FOIA Advisory Committee,

I am excited to find an email address to voice my FOIA concerns. As a new Air Force FOIA specialist I see this program with new eyes and baffled at the way it does business. A few of my issues are the way classified requests, foreigners who submit requests and tracking overdue requests are handled. My suggestions are as follows:

I would like congress to create a new category for "Classified" FOIA requested. I understand they currently fall under "Complex" which allows the normal 20 day response with an additional 10 day extension but this is hardly adequate. As you know it could take up to 4 months or longer to declassified a document, and that's if everything goes right. In fact, why aren't these requests sent immediately over to the Mandatory Declassification Records (MDR) process if they are over 25 yrs old? This branch of govt is better equipped/trained to handle these type of records. My first Classified request took over 1 1/2 yrs to respond because I didn't know what I was doing, where to go for help or what questions to ask?

Recommend suspense dates be based upon the document length? A document that is 1 page in length is totally different from a document that consist of 10,000 pages! Yet they both have the same suspense date, 20 days? Common sense says this is impossible. To base this programs success on this 20 day time limit doesn't make sense, it is set up for failure.

Next concern - why do foreigners who fall in the "Other" category get records at the same cost as US citizens who pay taxes? As foreigners they should fall in the "Commercial" category and pay for all services. I have 12 requests right now from a gentlemen in Holland asking for classified records, some are over 1,200 pages in length. His requests alone will require my attention for the next full year and he pays absolutely nothing. This is totally free and totally absurd.

I would like FOIA suspense's set according to document size and complexity. This cookie cutter approach of one size fits all to be answered in 20 days does not pass the common sense test. I hope you can convince congress in fixing this broken process soon.

Please let me know how this process works so I can track the progress of these suggestions. Thank you for listening.

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