

The background of the page is a dark blue color. In the center, there is a large, faint, circular seal of the Federal Election Commission. The seal features a stylized American flag with stars and stripes, and the text "FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION" at the top and "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" at the bottom, separated by two stars.

**FEDERAL ELECTION  
COMMISSION**

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT  
ANNUAL REPORT  
FISCAL YEAR 2020**

**Federal Election Commission  
Freedom of Information Act Annual Report  
Fiscal Year 2020**

**I. BASIC INFORMATION REGARDING REPORT**

1. Person(s) to be contacted with questions about the Report.

**Gregory R. Baker, Chief Freedom of Information Act Officer  
Christine McClarin, Freedom of Information Act Public Liaison  
Candace J. Salley, Government Information Specialist,  
Freedom of Information Act Requester Service Center**

**Federal Election Commission  
1050 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20463  
(202) 694-1650**

2. Electronic link for access to the Report on the agency website.

<https://www.fec.gov/about/reports-about-fec/foia-reports/>

3. How to obtain a copy of the Report in paper form.

**Contact:**

**FOIA Requester Service Center, ATTN: Candace J. Salley  
Federal Election Commission  
1050 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20463  
(202) 694-1650**

**II. MAKING A FOIA REQUEST**

1. Agency components<sup>1</sup> that receive FOIA requests.

**Federal Election Commission  
FOIA Requester Service Center  
1050 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20463**

---

<sup>1</sup> Please note that because the Commission is a small agency, the entire agency is considered to be one component (as opposed to individual divisions).

**(202) 694-1650**  
**(202) 219-1043 (fax number)**  
**foia@fec.gov (email address)**

2. Brief description of why some requests are not granted and an overview of certain general categories of the agency's records to which the FOIA exemptions apply.

The Federal Election Commission (FEC) is an independent regulatory agency with jurisdiction over the financing of campaigns in federal elections (that is, those for President and Vice President of the United States, United States Senator, and United States Representative). It also administers the public financing program for Presidential elections. The Commission enforces the limits on the sources and amounts of contributions to candidates for federal office, reviews the registration and periodic reports filed by political committees supporting federal candidates, and publicly discloses those reports.

By far, the most frequent reason requests are denied at the FEC is that the agency has no responsive records. Some FOIA requesters do not clearly understand the limits on the agency's jurisdiction and ask for documents that the Agency does not maintain, such as information pertaining to state or local elections, voter registration and voter turnout information, and information regarding the qualifications of candidates. Other documents are not released because the release of information concerning the Agency's open enforcement cases and conciliation efforts in enforcement matters is prohibited from disclosure by the Federal Election Campaign Act. See 52 U.S.C. §§ 30109(a)(4)(B) (conciliation), 30109(a)(12) (open enforcement matters). Consequently, this material is exempt from disclosure under FOIA Exemption 3.

Other FOIA exemptions that often apply to FEC records include, but are not limited to:

- a) Inter-agency or intra-agency communications that are protected by the deliberative process, attorney-client, or attorney work-product privileges (Exemption 5); and
- b) Information involving matters of personal privacy (Exemptions 6 and 7I).

### **III. ACRONYMS, DEFINITIONS, AND EXEMPTIONS**

1. Agency-specific acronyms or terms used in this Report.

- a. **FEC – Federal Election Commission**
- b. **FECA – Federal Election Campaign Act**

2. Definitions of terms used in this Report:

- a. **Administrative Appeal** – a request to a federal agency asking that it review at a higher administrative level a FOIA determination made by the agency at the initial request level.
- b. **Average Number** – the number obtained by dividing the sum of a group of numbers by the quantity of numbers in the group. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the average number is 8.
- c. **Backlog** – the number of requests or administrative appeals that are pending at an agency at the end of the fiscal year that are beyond the statutory time period for a response.
- d. **Component** – for agencies that process requests on a decentralized basis, a “component” is an entity, also sometimes referred to as an Office, Division, Bureau, Center, or Directorate, within the agency that processes FOIA requests. The FOIA now requires that agencies include in their Annual FOIA Report data for both the overall agency and for each principal component of the agency.
- e. **Consultation** – the procedure whereby the agency responding to a FOIA request first forwards a record to another agency for its review because that other agency has an interest in the document. Once the agency in receipt of the consultation finishes its review of the record, it responds back to the agency that forwarded it. That agency, in turn, will then respond to the FOIA requester.
- f. **Exemption 3 Statute** – a federal statute that exempts information from disclosure and which the agency relies on to withhold information under subsection (b)(3) of the FOIA.
- g. **FOIA Request** – a FOIA request is generally a request to a federal agency for access to records concerning another person (i.e., a “third-party” request), or concerning an organization, or a particular topic of interest. FOIA requests also include requests made by requesters seeking records concerning themselves (i.e., “first-party” requests) when those requesters are not subject to the Privacy Act, such as non-U.S. citizens. Moreover, because all first-party requesters should be afforded the benefit of both the access provisions of the FOIA as well as those of the Privacy Act, FOIA requests also include any first-party requests where an agency determines that it must search beyond its Privacy Act “systems of records” or where a Privacy Act exemption applies, and the agency looks to FOIA to afford the greatest possible access. All requests which require the agency to utilize the FOIA in responding to the requester are included in this Report.

Additionally, a FOIA request includes records referred to the agency for processing and direct response to the requester. It does not, however, include records for which the agency has received a

consultation from another agency. (Consultations are reported separately in Section XII of this Report.)

- h. **Full Grant** – an agency decision to disclose all records in full in response to a FOIA request.
- i. **Full Denial** – an agency decision not to release any records in response to a FOIA request because the records are exempt in their entirety under one or more of the FOIA exemptions, or because of a procedural reason, such as when no records could be located.
- j. **Median Number** – the middle, not average, number. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the median number is 7.
- k. **Multi-Track Processing** – a system in which simple requests requiring relatively minimal review are placed in one processing track and more voluminous and complex requests are placed in one or more other tracks. Requests granted expedited processing are placed in another track. Requests in each track are processed on a first in/first out basis.
  - i. **Expedited Processing** – an agency will process a FOIA request on an expedited basis when a requester satisfies the requirements for expedited processing as set forth in the statute and in agency regulations.
  - ii. **Simple Request** – a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in its fastest (non-expedited) track based on the low volume and/or simplicity of the records requested.
  - iii. **Complex Request** – a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in a slower track based on the high volume and/or complexity of the records requested.
- l. **Partial Grant/Partial Denial** – in response to a FOIA request, an agency decision to disclose some portions of the records and to withhold others that are exempt under the FOIA, or to otherwise deny a portion of the request for a procedural reason.
- m. **Pending Request or Pending Administrative Appeal** – a request or administrative appeal for which an agency has not taken final action in all respects.
- n. **Perfect Request** – a request for records which reasonably describes such records and is made in accordance with published rules stating the time, place, fees (if any) and procedures to be followed.

- o. **Processed Request or Processed Administrative Appeal** – a request or administrative appeal for which an agency has taken final action in all respects.
  - p. **Range in Number of Days** – the lowest and highest number of days to process requests or administrative appeals.
  - q. **Time Limits** – the time period in the statute for an agency to respond to a FOIA request (ordinarily twenty working days from receipt of a perfected FOIA request).
3. Concise descriptions of the nine FOIA exemptions.
- a. Exemption 1: classified national defense and foreign relations information.
  - b. Exemption 2: internal agency rules and practices related to personnel matters.
  - c. Exemption 3: information that is prohibited from disclosure by a federal statute other than the FOIA.
  - d. Exemption 4: trade secrets and privileged or confidential business information.
  - e. Exemption 5: inter-agency or intra-agency communications that are protected by legal privileges.
  - f. Exemption 6: information involving matters of personal privacy.
  - g. Exemption 7: records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, to the extent that the production of those records (A) could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings; (B) would deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication; (C) could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy; (D) could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source; (E) would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions; or (F) could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual.
  - h. Exemption 8: information that is contained in or related to examination, operations, or condition reports prepared by, or on behalf of, an agency for the regulation or supervision of a financial institution.
  - i. Exemption 9: geological and geophysical information and data including maps, concerning wells.

**3. Agency Component Abbreviations**

Component Abbreviation	Component Name
FEC	Federal Election Commission

#### IV. Exemption 3 Statutes

Statute	Type of Information Withheld	Case Citation	Agency / Component	Number of Times Relied upon by Agency / Component	Total Number of Times Relied upon by Agency Overall
26 U.S.C. §§ 6103, 6105 (Internal Revenue Code)	Certain tax return information, to include Taxpayer Identification Numbers of third parties, and certain tax convention information	Church of Scientology v. IRS, 484 U.S. 9, 15 (1987) (26 U.S.C. § 6103); Elec. Priv. Info. Ctr. v. IRS, 910 F.3d 1232 (D.C. Cir. 2018); Leonard v. U.S. Dep't of Treasury, 590 F. App'x. 141, 143-44 (3d Cir. 2014) (per curiam); Pac. Fisheries, Inc. v. IRS, 395 F. App'x. 438, 440 (9th Cir. 2010) (unpublished disposition) (26 U.S.C. §§ 6103, 6105); Tax Analysts v. IRS, 217 F. Supp. 2d	FEC	1	1

		23, 27-29 (D.D.C. 2002) (26 U.S.C. § 6105).			
52 U.S.C. § 30109(a)(4) (Federal Election Campaign Act)	Action by the Commission or any person, and information derived, in connection with any conciliation attempt by the Commission in relation to certain complaints filed with the Commission	N/A	FEC	1	1
52 U.S.C. § 30109(a)(12)(A) (formerly at 2 U.S.C. § 437(a)(12)(A)) (Federal Election Campaign Act)	Any notification or investigation made under this section of the Federal Election Campaign Act pertaining to federal campaign funds	Gov't Accountability Project v. FDA, 206 F. Supp. 3d 420, 433 (D.D.C. 2016).	FEC	14	14

**V.A. FOIA REQUESTS -- RECEIVED, PROCESSED AND PENDING FOIA REQUESTS**

Agency / Component	Number of Requests Pending as of Start of Fiscal Year	Number of Requests Received in Fiscal Year	Number of Requests Processed in Fiscal Year	Number of Requests Pending as of End of Fiscal Year
FEC	61	105	148	18
AGENCY OVERALL	61	105	148	18

*After reviewing its database, the FEC updated the number of requests pending at the start of the Fiscal Year.*

**V.B.(1). DISPOSITION OF FOIA REQUESTS -- ALL PROCESSED REQUESTS**

Agency / Component	Number of Full Grants	Number of Partial Grants / Partial Denials	Number of Full Denials Based on Exemptions	Number of Full Denials Based on Reasons Other than Exemptions									TOTAL
				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 *Explain in Chart Below	
FEC	36	49	6	44	0	5	0	4	2	1	0	1	148
AGENCY OVERALL	36	49	6	44	0	5	0	4	2	1	0	1	148

**V.B.(2). DISPOSITION OF FOIA REQUESTS -- "OTHER" REASONS FOR "FULL DENIALS BASED ON REASONS OTHER THAN EXEMPTIONS"**

Agency / Component	Description of "Other" Reasons for Denials from Chart B(1)	Number of Times "Other" Reason Was Relied Upon	TOTAL
FEC	Unable to Locate or Contact Requester	1	1
AGENCY OVERALL			1

**V.B.(3). DISPOSITION OF FOIA REQUESTS -- NUMBER OF TIMES EXEMPTIONS APPLIED**

Agency / Component	Ex. 1	Ex. 2	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
FEC	0	6	16	4	37	32	1	0	7	1	4	0	0	0
AGENCY OVERALL	0	6	16	4	37	32	1	0	7	1	4	0	0	0

**VI.A. ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS OF INITIAL DETERMINATIONS OF FOIA REQUESTS -- RECEIVED, PROCESSED, AND PENDING ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS**

Agency / Component	Number of Appeals Pending as of Start of Fiscal Year	Number of Appeals Received in Fiscal Year	Number of Appeals Processed in Fiscal Year	Number of Appeals Pending as of End of Fiscal Year
FEC	1	8	7	2
AGENCY OVERALL	1	8	7	2

**VI.B. DISPOSITION OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS -- ALL PROCESSED APPEALS**

Agency / Component	Number Affirmed on Appeal	Number Partially Affirmed & Partially Reversed/Remanded on Appeal	Number Completely Reversed/Remanded on Appeal	Number of Appeals Closed for Other Reasons	TOTAL
FEC	5	0	0	2	7
AGENCY OVERALL	5	0	0	2	7

**VI.C.(1). REASONS FOR DENIAL ON APPEAL -- NUMBER OF TIMES EXEMPTIONS APPLIED**

Agency / Component	Ex. 1	Ex. 2	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
FEC	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
AGENCY OVERALL	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

**VI.C.(2). REASONS FOR DENIAL ON APPEAL -- REASONS OTHER THAN EXEMPTIONS**

Agency / Component	No Records	Records Referred at Initial Request Level	Request Withdrawn	Fee-Related Reason	Records not Reasonably Described	Improper Request for Other Reasons	Not Agency Record	Duplicate Request or Appeal	Request in Litigation	Appeal Based Solely on Denial of Request for Expedited Processing	Other *Explain in chart below
FEC	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AGENCY OVERALL	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**VI.C.(3). REASONS FOR DENIAL ON APPEAL -- "OTHER" REASONS**

Agency / Component	Description of "Other" Reasons for Denial on Appeal from Chart C(2)	Number of Times "Other" Reason Was Relied Upon	TOTAL
FEC	N/A	0	0
AGENCY OVERALL			0



**VII.A. FOIA REQUESTS -- RESPONSE TIME FOR ALL PROCESSED PERFECTED REQUESTS**

Agency / Component	SIMPLE				COMPLEX				EXPEDITED PROCESSING			
	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days
FEC	11	36.4	2	355	83	221.1	6	1499	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AGENCY OVERALL	11	36.4	2	355	83	221.1	6	1499	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**VII.B. PROCESSED REQUESTS -- RESPONSE TIME FOR PERFECTED REQUESTS IN WHICH INFORMATION WAS GRANTED**

Agency / Component	SIMPLE				COMPLEX				EXPEDITED PROCESSING			
	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days
FEC	12	35.7	3	289	164	300.3	10	1499	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AGENCY OVERALL	12	35.7	3	289	164	300.3	10	1499	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**VII.C. PROCESSED SIMPLE REQUESTS -- RESPONSE TIME IN DAY INCREMENTS**

Agency / Component	<1-20 Days	21-40 Days	41-60 Days	61-80 Days	81-100 Days	101-120 Days	121-140 Days	141-160 Days	161-180 Days	181-200 Days	201-300 Days	301-400 Days	401+ Days	TOTAL
FEC	52	12	5	1	2	1	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	79
AGENCY OVERALL	52	12	5	1	2	1	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	79

**VII.C. PROCESSED COMPLEX REQUESTS -- RESPONSE TIME IN DAY INCREMENTS**

Agency / Component	<1-20 Days	21-40 Days	41-60 Days	61-80 Days	81-100 Days	101-120 Days	121-140 Days	141-160 Days	161-180 Days	181-200 Days	201-300 Days	301-400 Days	401+ Days	TOTAL
FEC	15	8	2	6	2	1	3	2	1	0	3	7	13	63
AGENCY OVERALL	15	8	2	6	2	1	3	2	1	0	3	7	13	63

**VII.C. PROCESSED REQUESTS GRANTED EXPEDITED PROCESSING -- RESPONSE TIME IN DAY INCREMENTS**

Agency / Component	<1-20 Days	21-40 Days	41-60 Days	61-80 Days	81-100 Days	101-120 Days	121-140 Days	141-160 Days	161-180 Days	181-200 Days	201-300 Days	301-400 Days	401+ Days	TOTAL
FEC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AGENCY OVERALL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**VII.D. PENDING REQUESTS -- ALL PENDING PERFECTED REQUESTS**

Agency / Component	SIMPLE			COMPLEX			EXPEDITED PROCESSING		
	Number Pending	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Number Pending	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Number Pending	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days
FEC	2	1	1	16	306.5	366.4	0	N/A	N/A
AGENCY OVERALL	2	1	1	16	306.5	366.4	0	N/A	N/A

**VII.E. PENDING REQUESTS -- TEN OLDEST PENDING PERFECTED REQUESTS**

Agency / Component		10th Oldest Request	9th	8th	7th	6th	5th	4th	3rd	2nd	Oldest Request
FEC	Date of Receipt	2020-01-31	2019-10-21	2019-04-03	2019-03-21	2018-12-20	2018-07-10	2018-05-29	2018-04-11	2018-01-24	2014-05-14
	Number of Days Pending	169	237	376	385	445	558	587	620	674	1599
AGENCY OVERALL	Date of Receipt	2020-01-31	2019-10-21	2019-04-03	2019-03-21	2018-12-20	2018-07-10	2018-05-29	2018-04-11	2018-01-24	2014-05-14
	Number of Days Pending	169	237	376	385	445	558	587	620	674	1599

**VIII.A. REQUESTS FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING**

Agency / Component	Number Granted	Number Denied	Median Number of Days to Adjudicate	Average Number of Days to Adjudicate	Number Adjudicated Within Ten Calendar Days
FEC	0	0	N/A	N/A	0
AGENCY OVERALL	0	0	N/A	N/A	0

**VIII.B. Requests for Fee Waiver**

Agency / Component	Number Granted	Number Denied	Median Number of Days to Adjudicate	Average Number of Days to Adjudicate
FEC	35	0	1	1
AGENCY OVERALL	35	0	1	1

**IX. FOIA Personnel and Costs**

Agency / Component	PERSONNEL			COSTS		
	Number of "Full-Time FOIA Employees"	Number of "Equivalent Full-Time FOIA Employees"	Total Number of "Full-Time FOIA Staff"	Processing Costs	Litigation-Related Costs	Total Costs
FEC	1	2.84	3.84	382295.91	33623.11	415919.02
AGENCY OVERALL	1	2.84	3.84	382295.91	33623.11	415919.02

**X. Fees Collected for Processing Requests**

Agency / Component	Total Amount of Fees Collected	Percentage of Total Costs
FEC	0.00	0.0000
AGENCY OVERALL	0.00	0.0000

**XI.A. Number of Times Subsection (C) Used**

Agency / Component	Number of Times Subsection Used
FEC	0
AGENCY OVERALL	0

**XI.B. Number of Subsection (A)(2) Postings**

Agency / Component	Number of Records Posted by the FOIA Office	Number of Records Posted by Program Offices
FEC	289	28
AGENCY OVERALL	289	28

**XII.A. Backlogs of FOIA Requests and Administrative Appeals**

Agency / Component	Number of Backlogged Requests as of End of Fiscal Year	Number of Backlogged Appeals as of End of Fiscal Year
FEC	12	2
AGENCY OVERALL	12	2



**XII.D.(1). COMPARISON OF NUMBERS OF REQUESTS FROM PREVIOUS AND CURRENT ANNUAL REPORT -- REQUESTS RECEIVED AND PROCESSED**

Agency / Component	NUMBER OF REQUESTS <u>RECEIVED</u>		NUMBER OF REQUESTS <u>PROCESSED</u>	
	Number Received During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report	Number Received During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report	Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report	Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report
FEC	116	105	127	148
AGENCY OVERALL	116	105	127	148

**XII.D.(2). COMPARISON OF NUMBERS OF REQUESTS FROM PREVIOUS AND CURRENT ANNUAL REPORT -- BACKLOGGED REQUESTS**

Agency / Component	Number of Backlogged Requests as of End of the Fiscal Year from Previous Annual Report	Number of Backlogged Requests as of End of the Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report
FEC	51	12
AGENCY OVERALL	51	12

**XII.E.(1). COMPARISON OF NUMBERS OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS FROM PREVIOUS AND CURRENT ANNUAL REPORT -- APPEALS RECEIVED AND PROCESSED**

Agency / Component	NUMBER OF APPEALS <u>RECEIVED</u>		NUMBER OF APPEALS <u>PROCESSED</u>	
	Number Received During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report	Number Received During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report	Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report	Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report
FEC	1	8	9	7
AGENCY OVERALL	1	8	9	7

**XII.E.(2). COMPARISON OF NUMBERS OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS FROM PREVIOUS AND CURRENT ANNUAL REPORT -- BACKLOGGED APPEALS**

Agency / Component	Number of Backlogged Appeals as of End of the Fiscal Year from Previous Annual Report	Number of Backlogged Appeals as of End of the Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report
FEC	1	2
AGENCY OVERALL	1	2