

FEDERAL RETIREMENT THRIFT INVESTMENT BOARD

2019 Chief FOIA Officer Report

Stefanie George, Assistant General Counsel

The Agency's mission is to administer the Thrift Savings Plan solely in the interest of its participants and beneficiaries. We feel we have always maintained a well-balanced presumption of openness whenever possible to inform the public without jeopardizing the safety and security of the participants and beneficiaries' protected information. We have not experienced an increase in proactive disclosures due to the fact that the majority of the information withheld from FOIA requests is that of a personal and confidential nature and would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, which does not lend itself to discretionary release. However, there are a number of records that the Agency does proactively release on its website and those include, for example, materials on the monthly Board meeting minutes, vendor financial status reports, legislative reports, monthly participant activity reports, monthly investment performance reports, and administrative expense reports. These are all posted on our Agency's website at <http://www.frtib.gov/Home.html>.

This year the Agency will began using a system that divides incoming FOIA requests according to their complexity so that simple requests requiring relatively minimal search and review are placed in one processing track and the more complex requests are placed in another track. This system is not new to FOIA, but it is not something the Agency has utilized in the past. We believe this process will help improve timeliness in responding to requests.

Communication with FOIA requestors is important to us and essential to the FOIA process. The Agency handles most of its FOIA communications through email. However, every now and then an issue will arise where either the FOIA Officer or the FOIA Public Liaison will speak to the requestor over the phone, in an effort to quickly resolve the problem. The FOIA Public Liaison continues to be an essential part of the FOIA office by helping the Agency provide a service for its requesters, informing them about how the FOIA process works, and providing details on the status of their individual requests.

Lastly, the Agency's FOIA office and IT department are currently working together to make a few simple changes to our FOIA webpage. The goal is to make it more user friendly by improving the layout, making navigation easier, and providing the public with contacts and additional FOIA-related links that may be helpful in their search for records.