

# The Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act, known as the FOIA, is a law that gives any person the right to request federal agency records. The FOIA also requires federal agencies to make certain types of information available to the public without the need to submit a request.



## Who?

Anyone can make a FOIA request, regardless of citizenship, including:

Individuals,  
Partnerships,  
Corporations  
and  
Organizations



## What?

Any agency records can be requested, including:



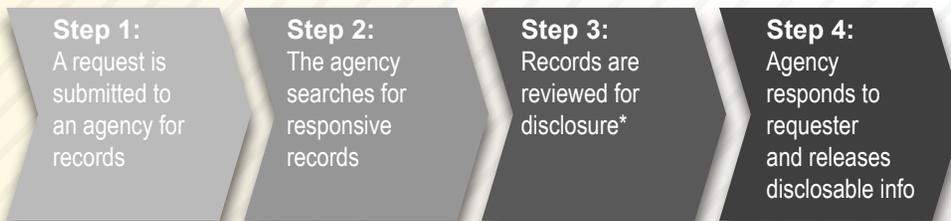
Paper documents, emails, audio and video recordings, and other electronic records

## When?

Generally, an agency has 20 working days to respond to a request, unless there are unusual circumstances



## How?



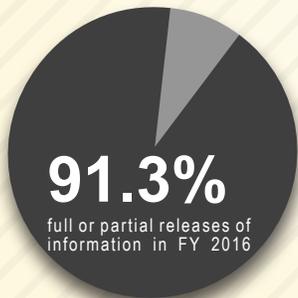
\*Information can only be withheld if it falls within one of nine exemptions

## Why?

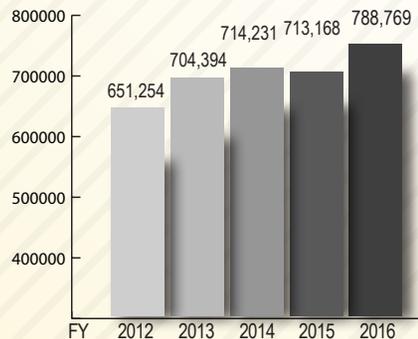
"The basic purpose of [the] FOIA is to ensure an informed citizenry, vital to the functioning of a democratic society, needed to check against corruption and to hold the governors accountable to the governed."

NLRB v. Robbins Tire & Rubber Co., 437 U.S. 214, 242 (1978)

## FOIA by the Numbers



FOIA requests received overall



**Most cited exemptions:**  
**6 & 7 (C)**  
- which -  
**protect individual personal privacy**

visit [foia.gov](http://foia.gov)

## FOIA at Your Agency

FOIA is everyone's responsibility. Any documents you create or maintain as part of your job may be responsive to a FOIA request. FOIA professionals at your agency will receive and respond to requests, but they may call on you for assistance in searching for responsive records and reviewing those records for release. These professionals are a critical resource. If you have any questions about the FOIA, you should contact them.

