



September 29, 2016

**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**  
**Attn: FOI/PA Request**

David P. Sobonya, FOIPA Public Information Officer (PIO)  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Record/Information Dissemination Section (RIDS)  
170 Marcel Drive  
Winchester, VA 22602-4843  
Fax: (540) 868-4391/4997  
E-mail: foiparequest@ic.fbi.gov

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request**

Dear Mr. Sobonya:

I write on behalf of Cause of Action Institute (“CoA Institute”), a nonprofit strategic oversight group committed to ensuring that government decision-making is open, honest, and fair.<sup>1</sup> In carrying out its mission, CoA Institute uses various investigative and legal tools to educate the public about the importance of government transparency and accountability. To that end, we are examining the ongoing long-term investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI” or “Bureau”) related to the financing of certain Arizona statewide electoral races in the 2014 election cycle, and Arizona Public Service’s (“APS”) unprecedented millions of dollars in spending over the last three years to influence the regulators on the Arizona Corporation Commission (“ACC”). Additionally, CoA Institute is examining the relationship between the Checks and Balances Project of Arizona (“CBP”) and SolarCity Corp., (“SolarCity”) including but not limited to, the Bureau’s interactions with Scott Petersen of CBP, and former ACC Commissioner Gary Pierce.

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (“FOIA”), CoA Institute hereby requests access to the following records for the time period January 1, 2013 to the present:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See CAUSE OF ACTION INSTITUTE, *About*, [www.causeofaction.org/about/](http://www.causeofaction.org/about/).

<sup>2</sup> For purposes of this request, the term “present” should be construed as the date on which the agency begins its search for responsive records. See *Pub. Citizen v. Dep’t of State*, 276 F.3d 634 (D.C. Cir. 2002). The term “record” means the entirety of the record any portion of which contains responsive information. See *Am. Immigration Lawyers Ass’n v. Exec. Office for Immigration Review*, No. 15-5201, 2016 WL 4056405, at \*7-9 (D.C. Cir. July 29, 2016) (admonishing agency for withholding information as “non-responsive” because “nothing in the

1. All communications or records by and between Special Agent Matthew Reinsmoen and FBI agents, servants and/or employees regarding APS, ACC, CBP, and/or SolarCity;
2. All communications or records by and between FBI agents, servants and/or employees regarding APS, ACC, CBP, and/or SolarCity;
3. All communications or records by and between FBI agents, servants and/or employees and APS, ACC, CBP, Save Our AZ Solar, Energy Choice for America, Renew American Progress, and/or SolarCity or their respective agents, servants, and/or employees;
4. All communications or records by and between FBI agents, servants and/or employees and the White House regarding APS, ACC, CBP, SolarCity, and/or Elon Musk.
5. All communications or records between FBI agents, servants and/or employees and the following individuals:
  - Robert Burns
  - Kris Mayes
  - Tom Chabin
  - Rick Gray
  - Al Melvin
  - Boyd Dunn
  - William Mundell
  - Tom Forese
  - Doug Little
  - Gary Pierce
  - Scott Peterson
  - Bob Stump
  - Susan Bitter Smith
  - Scott Hempling

**Request for a Public Interest Fee Waiver**

CoA Institute requests a waiver of any and all applicable fees. FOIA and applicable regulations provide that the agency shall furnish requested records without or at reduced charge if “disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not

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statute suggests that the agency may parse a responsive record to redact specific information within it even if none of the statutory exemptions shields that information from disclosure”).

primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.”<sup>3</sup> In this case, there is significant public interest regarding the potential corruption involved in the 2014 statewide electoral races in Arizona, as well as the interactions between ACC and CBD.

CoA Institute has both the intent and ability to make the results of this request available to a reasonably broad public audience through various media. Its staff has significant experience and expertise in government oversight, investigative reporting, and federal public interest litigation. These professionals will analyze the information responsive to this request, use their editorial skills to turn raw materials into a distinct work, and share the resulting analysis with the public, whether through the Institute’s regularly published online newsletter, memoranda, reports, or press releases.<sup>4</sup> In addition, as CoA Institute is a non-profit organization as defined under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, it has no commercial interest in making this request.

### **Request To Be Classified as a Representative of the News Media**

For fee status purposes, CoA Institute also qualifies as a “representative of the news media” under FOIA.<sup>5</sup> As the D.C. Circuit recently held, the “representative of the news media” test is properly focused on the requestor, not the specific FOIA request at issue.<sup>6</sup> CoA Institute satisfies this test because it gathers information of potential interest to a segment of the public, uses its editorial skills to turn raw materials into a distinct work, and distributes that work to an audience.<sup>7</sup> Although it is not required by the statute, CoA Institute gathers the news it regularly publishes from a variety of sources, including FOIA requests, whistleblowers/insiders, and scholarly works. It does not merely make raw information available to the public, but rather distributes distinct work products, including articles, blog posts, investigative reports, newsletters, and congressional testimony and statements for the record.<sup>8</sup> These distinct works

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<sup>3</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii); 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k); *see also Cause of Action v. Fed. Trade Comm’n*, 799 F.3d 1108, 1115-19 (D.C. Cir. 2015) (discussing proper application of public-interest fee waiver test).

<sup>4</sup> *See also Cause of Action*, 799 F.3d at 1125-26 (holding that public interest advocacy organizations may partner with others to disseminate their work).

<sup>5</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II); 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(b)(6).

<sup>6</sup> *See Cause of Action*, 799 F.3d at 1121.

<sup>7</sup> CoA Institute notes that the agency’s definition of “representative of the news media” (28 C.F.R. § 16.10(b)(6)) is in conflict with the statutory definition and controlling case law. The agency has improperly retained the outdated “organized and operated” standard that Congress abrogated when it provided a statutory definition in the OPEN Government Act of 2007. *See Cause of Action*, 799 F.3d at 1125 (“Congress . . . omitted the ‘organized and operated’ language when it enacted the statutory definition in 2007. . . . [Therefore,] there is no basis for adding an ‘organized and operated’ requirement to the statutory definition.”). Under either definition, however, CoA Institute qualifies as a representative of the news media.

<sup>8</sup> *See, e.g., Cause of Action Testifies Before Congress on Questionable White House Detail Program* (May 19, 2015), available at <http://coainst.org/2aJ8UAA>; COA INSTITUTE, 2015 GRADING THE GOVERNMENT REPORT CARD (Mar. 16, 2015), available at <http://coainst.org/2as088a>; *Cause of Action Launches Online Resource*:

are distributed to the public through various media, including the Institute's website, Twitter, and Facebook. CoA Institute also provides news updates to subscribers via e-mail.

The statutory definition of a "representative of the news media" contemplates that organizations such as CoA Institute, which electronically disseminate information and publications via "alternative media[,] shall be considered to be news-media entities."<sup>9</sup> In light of the foregoing, numerous federal agencies—including the Department of Justice and its component FBI—have appropriately recognized the Institute's news media status in connection with its FOIA requests.<sup>10</sup>

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*ExecutiveBranchEarmarks.com* (Sept. 8, 2014), available at <http://coainst.org/2aJ8sm5>; COA INSTITUTE, GRADING THE GOVERNMENT: HOW THE WHITE HOUSE TARGETS DOCUMENT REQUESTERS (Mar. 18, 2014), available at <http://coainst.org/2aFWxUZ>; COA INSTITUTE, GREENTECH AUTOMOTIVE: A VENTURE CAPITALIZED BY CRONYISM (Sept. 23, 2013), available at <http://coainst.org/2apTwqP>; COA INSTITUTE, POLITICAL PROFITEERING: HOW FOREST CITY ENTERPRISES MAKES PRIVATE PROFITS AT THE EXPENSE OF AMERICAN TAXPAYERS PART I (Aug. 2, 2013), available at <http://coainst.org/2aJh901>.

<sup>9</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II).

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., FOIA Request 1355038-000, Fed. Bureau of Investigation, Dep't of Justice (Aug. 2, 2016); FOIA Request CFPB-2016-222-F, Consumer Fin. Prot. Bureau (Apr. 20, 2016); FOIA Request CFPB-2016-207-F, Consumer Fin. Prot. Bureau (Apr. 14, 2016); FOIA Request 796939, Dep't of Labor (Mar. 7, 2016); FOIA Request 2015-HQFO-00691, Dep't of Homeland Sec. (Sept. 22, 2015); FOIA Request F-2015-12930, Dept. of State (Sept. 2, 2015); FOIA Request 14-401-F, Dep't of Educ. (Aug. 13, 2015); FOIA Request HQ-2015-01689-F, Dep't of Energy (Aug. 7, 2015); FOIA Request 2015-OSEC-04996-F, Dep't of Agric. (Aug. 6, 2015); FOIA Request OS-2015-00419, Dep't of Interior (Aug. 3, 2015); FOIA Request 780831, Dep't of Labor (Jul 23, 2015); FOIA Request 15-05002, Sec. & Exch. Comm'n (July 23, 2015); FOIA Request 145-FOI-13785, Dep't of Justice (Jun. 16, 2015); FOIA Request 15-00326-F, Dep't of Educ. (Apr. 08, 2015); FOIA Request 2015-26, Fed. Energy Regulatory Comm'n (Feb. 13, 2015); FOIA Request HQ-2015-00248, Dep't of Energy (Nat'l Headquarters) (Dec. 15, 2014); FOIA Request F-2015-106, Fed. Commc'n Comm'n (Dec. 12, 2014); FOIA Request HQ-2015-00245-F, Dep't of Energy (Dec. 4, 2014); FOIA Request F-2014-21360, Dep't of State, (Dec. 3, 2014); FOIA Request LR-2015-0115, Nat'l Labor Relations Bd. (Dec. 1, 2014); FOIA Request 201500009F, Exp.-Imp. Bank (Nov. 21, 2014); FOIA Request 2015-OSEC-00771-F, Dep't of Agric. (OCIO) (Nov. 21, 2014); FOIA Request OS-2015-00068, Dep't of Interior (Office of Sec'y) (Nov. 20, 2014); FOIA Request CFPB-2015-049-F, Consumer Fin. Prot. Bureau (Nov. 19, 2014); FOIA Request GO-14-307, Dep't of Energy (Nat'l Renewable Energy Lab.) (Aug. 28, 2014); FOIA Request HQ-2014-01580-F, Dep't of Energy (Nat'l Headquarters) (Aug. 14, 2014); FOIA Request LR-20140441, Nat'l Labor Relations Bd. (June 4, 2014); FOIA Request 14-01095, Sec. & Exch. Comm'n (May 7, 2014); FOIA Request 2014-4QFO-00236, Dep't of Homeland Sec. (Jan. 8, 2014); FOIA Request DOC-OS-2014-000304, Dep't of Commerce (Dec. 30, 2013); FOIA Request 14F-036, Health Res. & Serv. Admin. (Dec. 6, 2013); FOIA Request 2013-073, Dep't of Homeland Sec. (Apr. 5, 2013); FOIA Request 2012-RMA-02563F, Dep't of Agric. (May 3, 2012); FOIA Request 2012-00270, Dep't of Interior (Feb. 17, 2012); FOIA Request 12-00455-F, Dep't of Educ. (Jan. 20, 2012).

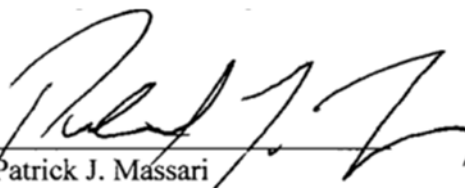
**Record Preservation Requirement**

CoA Institute requests that the disclosure officer responsible for the processing of this request issue an immediate hold on all records responsive, or potentially responsive, to this request, so as to prevent their disposal until such time as a final determination has been issued on the request and any administrative remedies for appeal have been exhausted. It is unlawful for an agency to destroy or dispose of any record subject to a FOIA request.<sup>11</sup>

**Record Production and Contact Information**

In an effort to facilitate document review, please provide the responsive documents in electronic form in lieu of a paper production. If a certain portion of responsive records can be produced more readily, CoA Institute requests that those records be produced first and the remaining records be produced on a rolling basis as circumstances permit.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact me by telephone at (202) 499-4232 or by e-mail at patrick.massari@causeofaction.org. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

  
Patrick J. Massari  
Counsel

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<sup>11</sup> See 28 C.F.R. § 16.10; 36 C.F.R. § 1230.3(b) (“Unlawful or accidental destruction (also called unauthorized destruction) means . . . disposal of a record subject to a FOIA request, litigation hold, or any other hold requirement to retain the records.”); *Chambers v. Dep’t of the Interior*, 568 F.3d 998, 1004-05 (D.C. Cir. 2009) (“[A]n agency is not shielded from liability if it intentionally transfers or destroys a document after it has been requested under the FOIA or the Privacy Act.”); *Judicial Watch, Inc. v. Dep’t of Commerce*, 34 F. Supp. 2d 28, 41-44 (D.D.C. 1998).