

2019 Chief FOIA Officer Report for the Postal Regulatory Commission

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The mission of the Postal Regulatory Commission (Commission) is to ensure transparency and accountability of the Postal Service and foster a vital and efficient universal mail system, and its guiding principles are openness, integrity, merit, and adaptability. In line with these principles, the Commission is committed to transparency, accountability, and open government in its Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) responsibilities and has worked this reporting period to improve its FOIA administration.

The Commission's records regarding all Commission cases are contained in its docketing system. The contents of all dockets, apart from certain items designated as nonpublic by submitters, are available for inspection on the Commission's website. The nonpublic records are clearly identified on the public website and are usually posted in redacted form. The United States Postal Service (USPS) and other filers must provide specific justification for nonpublic treatment of the items to be so designated. Any person may petition the Commission for access to specified nonpublic records, or else may petition to have the access restrictions lifted entirely.

To further promote transparency in publicly accessible records, the Commission publishes detailed monthly updates to the Consumer Price Index calculations relating to the price cap on Market Dominant postal products. This is a valuable resource for the mailing industry and the public. The Commission also publishes a frequently updated summary of Negotiated Service Agreements (contracts between the USPS and private companies for special mailing agreements) and the Mail Classification Schedule. The Commission regularly posts budgetary and administrative information, such as the annual Congressional Budget Justification. To further the accessibility of the Commission proceedings and records, the Commission holds periodic public meetings and technical conferences. The meetings are publicly webcast and the recordings of these meetings are archived on the Commission's public website.

The Commission prides itself on the high priority given to responding completely and properly to all requests, and how fully, professionally, and quickly we respond. During FY 2017, the Commission received 38 FOIA requests, and provided responses to all simple requests within the statutory deadline of 20 business days. The Commission has a dedicated e-mail inbox solely for FOIA requests. This inbox is monitored on a daily basis by the Commission's FOIA team. Throughout FY 2018, the Commission continued to adjust our public website to make it easier to find and access Commission information and records.

To ensure smooth operation and timely processing our FOIA team meets weekly to assess workload and response time, and to discuss any issues that may be pending. During these weekly assessments, process improvements are discussed to keep response times within the statutory time limits for all requests. The entire Commission works to identify proactive disclosures and any identified records are reviewed for approval by the Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer, General Counsel, and the Chief FOIA Officer. Once approved, the records are then posted or released as appropriate. Once the response is sent out, the

Commission's tracking log is updated to reflect the action taken, the date the response was sent out, and how many days it took for the Commission to respond.

In line with the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, the Commission conducted a review and revision of its FOIA regulations and issued an order on the rule-making docket, RM2017-2, on December 19, 2016. The Commission implemented the "Rule of 3" for frequently requested records (i.e. the Commission makes available to the public, in electronic format, records that have been requested three or more times.); updated our reply language to FOIA requests advising requesters that dispute resolution is available through OGIS; and clarified in our response language that administrative appeal is available even when the adverse determination is not a denial.

Our FOIA team is committed to the "spirit of cooperation", and works to ensure good communication and customer service when working with our requesters. When the Commission has any questions or needs further clarification about the request, a member of our FOIA team immediately and personally reaches out to the FOIA requester. Additionally, effective communication among internal departments at the Commission and timely response by Commission employees to requests for records ensure that the Commission responds to all requests in an efficient and effective manner.

The Commission is proud of its open approach to the valuable records related to its mission in service to the American people. The FOIA team works hard to ensure that the Commission has a model FOIA program reflective of its fundamental commitment to open government.