

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.,	)	
425 Third Street, S.W., Suite 800	)	
Washington, DC 20024,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
v.	)	Civil Action No.
	)	
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY,	)	
c/o Office of the General Counsel	)	
1000 Independence Avenue, S.W.	)	
Washington, DC 20585,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	
_____	)	

**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff Judicial Watch, Inc. brings this action against Defendant U.S. Department of Energy to compel compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552. As grounds therefor, Plaintiff alleges as follows:

**JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

1. The Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(B) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.
2. Venue is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e).

**PARTIES**

3. Plaintiff Judicial Watch, Inc. is a not-for-profit, educational organization incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia and headquartered at 425 Third Street, S.W., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20024. Plaintiff seeks to promote transparency, integrity, and accountability in government and fidelity to the rule of law. As part of its mission, Plaintiff regularly requests records from federal agencies pursuant to FOIA. Plaintiff analyzes the

agencies' responses and disseminates both its findings and the requested records to the American public to inform them about "what their government is up to."

4. Defendant U.S. Department of Energy is an agency of the U.S. Government and is headquartered at 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20585. Defendant has possession, custody, and control of records to which Plaintiff seeks access.

#### **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

5. On April 3, 2024, Plaintiff submitted a FOIA request to Defendant seeking access to:

- A. All emails between any official or employee of the Department of Energy and any email address terminating in the domain "Podesta.com."
- B. All agendas, briefing materials, notes, or other records created in preparation for, during, or pursuant to any meeting between any official or employee of the Department of Energy and Anthony Podesta and/or Helen Hagerty. For purposes of clarification, Hagerty is a lobbyist with the firm Podesta.com.

The time frame for this request is January 1, 2021 to the present.

6. By letter dated April 4, 2024, Defendant acknowledged receiving Plaintiff's request and advised Plaintiff that the request had been assigned tracking number HQ-2024-01637-F.

7. Plaintiff has received no further response.

8. As of the date of this Complaint, Defendant has failed to (i) produce the requested records or demonstrate that the requested records are lawfully exempt from production; (ii) notify Plaintiff of the scope of any responsive records Defendant intends to produce or withhold and the reasons for any withholdings; or (iii) inform Plaintiff that it may appeal any adequately specific, adverse determination.

**COUNT I**  
**(Violation of FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552)**

9. Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1 through 8 as if fully stated herein.

10. Defendant is in violation of FOIA.

11. Plaintiff is being irreparably harmed by reason of Defendant's violation of FOIA, and Plaintiff will continue to be irreparably harmed unless Defendant is compelled to comply with the law.

12. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law.

13. To trigger FOIA's administrative exhaustion requirement, Defendant was required to make final a determination on Plaintiff's request May 2, 2024, at the latest. Because Defendant failed to make a final determination on Plaintiff's request within the time limits set by FOIA, Plaintiff is deemed to have exhausted its administrative appeal remedies.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court: (1) order Defendant to search for any and all records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request and demonstrate that it employed search methods reasonably calculated to uncover all records responsive to the request; (2) order Defendant to produce, by a date certain, any and all non-exempt records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request and a *Vaughn* index of any responsive records withheld under claim of exemption; (3) enjoin Defendant from continuing to withhold any and all non-exempt records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request; (4) grant Plaintiff an award of attorney's fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred in this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(E); and (5) grant Plaintiff such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

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Dated: July 24, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Michael Bekesha

Michael Bekesha (D.C. Bar No. 995749)

JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.

425 Third Street S.W., Suite 800

Washington, DC 20024

Phone: (202) 646-5172

mbekesha@judicialwatch.org

*Counsel for Plaintiff*