

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.,)
425 Third Street SW, Suite 800)
Washington, DC 20024,)

Plaintiff,)

v.)

Civil Action No.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF)
HOMELAND SECURITY,)
Office of the General Counsel)
245 Murray Lane, SW)
Mailstop 0485)
Washington, DC 20528-0485,)

Defendant.)

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Judicial Watch, Inc. brings this action against Defendant U.S. Department of Homeland Security to compel compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (“FOIA”). 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 SW, 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 Homeland Security, is an agency of the U.S. Government and is headquartered at 245 Murray Lane SW, Mailstop 0485, Washington, DC 20528. Defendant has possession, custody, and control of records to which Plaintiff seeks access.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

5. On July 19, 2024, Plaintiff served a FOIA request by email on the U.S. Secret Service ("Secret Service"), a component of Defendant U.S. Department of Homeland Security, seeking certain records relating to a reported incident involving the Secret Service and the vice president's motorcade. Specifically, the request seeks:

1. Any and all emails and text messages sent to and from members of the Vice Presidential Protection Division regarding the October 3, 2022 accident involving the vehicle carrying Vice President Kamala Harris and/or the driving skills/abilities of the agent driving the vehicle at the time of the accident. The time frame for this item is October 3, 2022 to the present,

2. All waivers for defensive driver classes granted to USSS special agents involved in vehicular accidents with official vehicles. The time frame for this item is February 28, 2014 to the present, and;

3. Records reflecting directives for USSS special agents to undergo defensive driver classes as a result of being involved in accidents with official vehicles. The time frame for this item is February 28, 2014 to the present.

6. By a letter dated July 22, 2024, the Secret Service acknowledged receipt of Plaintiff's request and stated that the request had been assigned FOIA File No. 20241112. The letter stated that the Secret Service was invoking a 10-day extension to respond to the request.

7. As of the date of this Complaint, the Secret Service has failed to produce the requested records or otherwise demonstrate that the requested records are exempt from production.

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

8. Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1 through 7 as if fully stated herein.

9. Defendant is in violation of FOIA.

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

11. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law.

12. To trigger FOIA's administrative exhaustion requirement, Defendant was required to make a final determination on Plaintiff's request and administrative appeal by August 30, 2024 at the latest.

13. 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 attorneys' 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.

Dated: September 26, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ James F. Peterson

James F. Peterson
D.C. Bar No. 450171
JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.
425 Third Street SW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20024
Tel: (202) 646-5175
Email: jpeterson@judicialwatch.org

Counsel for Plaintiff