

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 11, 2019

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and
Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307 The Capitol
Washington DC, 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and
Related Agencies
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC, 20515

Dear Chairman McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

We write to request a funding increase for the Department of the Interior's (DOI) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) program. According to DOI, it has experienced at least a 30% increase in new FOIA requests since the beginning of the Trump Administration.¹ DOI also reports having more than 100 FOIA cases in litigation due to agency non-response to FOIA requests and is suffering from staff attrition. The situation is particularly acute in the Office of the Secretary FOIA Office, where there has been a 210% increase in new FOIA requests from FY 2016.² An increase in funding is essential for ensuring that DOI can meet the government transparency goals under the FOIA.

Because of the large increase in FOIA requests and litigation, the growing backlog and overwhelming public interest in ensuring transparency during this Administration, we recommend that the funding increase be used to hire at least 10 FTEs dedicated solely to responding to FOIA requests. These FTEs should be supervised, to the extent it complies with FOIA, by the Department's Deputy Chief FOIA Officer, a career Senior Executive Service position in accordance with the current structure of DOI's FOIA program.

¹ House Committee on Oversight and Reform, *FOIA: Examining Transparency Under the Trump Administration* (Mar. 13, 2019) (Testimony of Rachel Spector, Deputy Chief Freedom of Information Act Officer, Office of the Solicitor, Department of the Interior).

² 83 FR 67175

Sincerely,



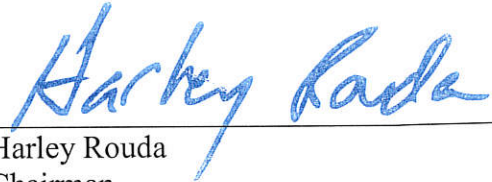
Raúl M. Grijalva
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources



Elijah E. Cummings
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Reform



TJ Cox
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
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Harley Rouda
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Subcommittee on the Environment
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