



CITIZENS FOR  
RESPONSIBILITY &  
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

January 4, 2021

**BY EMAIL: [FOIA@uss.s.dhs.gov](mailto:FOIA@uss.s.dhs.gov)**

Kevin Tyrrell  
FOIA Officer  
United States Secret Service  
Communications Center (FOIA/PA)  
245 Murray Lane, SW Building T-5  
Washington, D.C. 20223

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request**

Dear FOIA Officer:

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (“CREW”) makes this request for records pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and U.S. Department of Homeland Security regulations.

Specifically, CREW requests records sufficient to identify the total amount of government funds expended by the Secret Service in connection with Vice President Mike Pence’s trip to Vail, Colorado from December 2020 through January 2021, including without limitation the total costs of lodging, meals, and incidental expenses relating to the trip.

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. We seek records of any kind, including paper records, electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, data, and graphical material. Our request includes without limitation all correspondence, letters, emails, text messages, facsimiles, telephone messages, voice mail messages, and transcripts, notes, or minutes of any meetings, telephone conversations, or discussions. Our request also includes any attachments to emails and other records, as well as those who were cc’ed or bcc’ed on any emails.

If it is your position any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, CREW requests that you provide it with an index of those documents as required under *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973). In the event some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(b). If it is your position that a document contains non-exempt segments, but that those non-exempt segments are so dispersed throughout the document as to make segregation impossible, please state what portion of the document is non-exempt, and how the material is dispersed throughout the document. *See Mead Data Central v. U.S. Dep’t of the Air Force*, 566 F.2d 242, 261 (D.C. Cir. 1977).

## Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A) and agency regulations, CREW requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. The subject of this request concerns the operations of the federal government, and the disclosures likely will contribute to a better understanding of relevant government procedures by CREW and the general public in a significant way. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). Moreover, the request primarily and fundamentally is for non-commercial purposes. *See, e.g., McClellan Ecological v. Carlucci*, 835 F.2d 1282, 1285 (9th Cir. 1987).

As public health officials urged Americans not to travel amid the COVID-19 pandemic, Vice President Mike Pence traveled to Vail, Colorado, for a holiday ski trip.<sup>1</sup> Dozens of Secret Service agents reportedly accompanied Vice President on the trip, staying in the Grand Hyatt Vail and other locations around the Vail Valley.<sup>2</sup> The requested records will reveal the total amount of taxpayer funds that the Secret Service expended on the trip—an issue of compelling public interest.

CREW is a non-profit corporation, organized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. CREW is committed to protecting the public’s right to be aware of the activities of government officials, to ensuring the integrity of those officials, and to highlighting and working to reduce the influence of money on politics. CREW uses a combination of research, litigation, and advocacy to advance its mission. CREW intends to analyze the information responsive to this request and to share its analysis with the public through reports, press releases, or other means. In addition, CREW will disseminate documents it acquires from this request to the public through its website, [www.citizensforethics.org](http://www.citizensforethics.org). The release of information obtained through this request is not in CREW’s financial interest.

CREW further requests that it not be charged search or review fees for this request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II) because CREW qualifies as a member of the news media. *See Nat’l Sec. Archive v. U.S. Dep’t of Defense*, 880 F.2d 1381, 1386 (D.C. Cir. 1989) (holding non-profit a “representative of the news media” and broadly interpreting the term to include “any person or organization which regularly publishes or disseminates information to the public”).

CREW routinely and systematically disseminates information to the public in several ways. CREW’s website receives tens of thousands of page views every month. The website includes blogposts that report on and analyze newsworthy developments regarding government ethics, corruption, and money in politics, as well as numerous reports CREW has published to educate the public about these issues. In addition, CREW posts documents it receives under the FOIA on its website, which has been visited hundreds of thousands of times.

Under these circumstances, CREW satisfies fully the criteria for a fee waiver.

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<sup>1</sup> David O. Willims, *Vice President Pence reportedly returning to Vail for holidays*, *RealVail*, Dec. 22, 2020, <http://www.realvail.com/vice-president-pence-reportedly-returns-to-vail-valley-for-holidays/a9698/>.

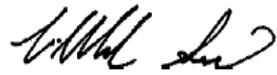
<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

## Conclusion

If you have any questions about this request or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records, please contact me at (202) 408-5565 or [nsus@citizensforethics.org](mailto:nsus@citizensforethics.org). Also, if CREW's request for a fee waiver is denied, please contact our office immediately upon making such a determination.

Where possible, please produce records in electronic format. Please send the requested records to me at either [nsus@citizensforethics.org](mailto:nsus@citizensforethics.org) or Nikhel Sus, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, 1101 K St., N.W., Suite 201, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nikhel Sus", written in a cursive style.

Nikhel Sus  
Senior Counsel