

October 14, 2026

Submitted via FOIA PAL

U.S. Department of State
Information Access Programs Directorate
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear FOIA Officer:

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington ("CREW") submits this request for records pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and Department of State ("DOS") regulations.

Specifically, CREW requests:

1. Records sufficient to show the total amount of government funds used to pay for Special Envoy for Peace Missions Steve Witkoff's diplomatic trips abroad, including but not limited to invoices, receipts, allowance schedules, travel advancements, refunds and reimbursements, or similar records reflecting such expenditures, from January 20, 2025 to the date this request is processed. Please include records relating to trips on or about the following dates:
 - October 8, 2025 - Egypt
 - October 9-13, 2025 - Israel
 - October 21, 2025 - Israel
 - October 22, 2025 - United Arab Emirates
 - November 10, 2025 - Israel
 - November 12, 2025 - Saudi Arabia
 - November 23, 2025 - Switzerland
 - December 2, 2025 - Russia
 - December 14, 2025 - Germany
 - January 6, 2026 - France
 - January 22, 2026 - Switzerland
 - January 23, 2026 - United Arab Emirates
 - January 24, 2026 - Israel
 - February 4, 2026 - United Arab Emirates
 - February 5, 2026 - Qatar
 - February 6, 2026 - Oman
 - February 7, 2026 - USSS Abraham Lincoln

- February 17, 2026 - Switzerland
 - February 26, 2026 - Switzerland
 - April 11, 2026 - Pakistan
 - June 20, 2026 - Switzerland
 - June 30-July 1, 2026 - Qatar
 - August 16, 2026 - Egypt
 - August 17, 2026 - Israel
 - September 5, 2026 - Russia
 - September 6, 2026 - Ukraine
2. Any other records reflecting the arrangement of Special Envoy Witkoff's trips, including but not limited to travel authorizations, justification memorandums, itineraries, trip logs, and documents reflecting accommodations and transportation from January 20, 2025 to the date this request is processed.

The above request excludes agency records consisting solely of news articles, press clippings, and other publicly-available material, so long as the records include no accompanying discussion by agency officials.

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, and anyone who was 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). If 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).

Please be advised that CREW intends to pursue all legal remedies to enforce its rights under FOIA. Accordingly, because litigation is reasonably foreseeable, the agency should institute an agencywide preservation hold on all documents potentially responsive to this request.

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 id.* § 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).

In President Donald Trump's second term, billionaire real estate executive Steve Witkoff has become one of his top foreign policy negotiators.¹ As Special Envoy for Peace Missions, Witkoff represents the United States in high-profile global conflicts,² and negotiates directly with foreign leaders.³ At the same time, Witkoff is a private businessman with extensive business ties to the Middle East, including through World Liberty Financial, the cryptocurrency company he founded with his sons and the Trump family.⁴ Witkoff's business interests appear to intersect with his diplomatic responsibilities. For example, last year an Emirati investment firm backed by national security advisor Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed al Nahyan bought nearly half of WLF.⁵ Witkoff has met with Sheikh Tahnoun in his official capacity to discuss conflicts in Gaza⁶ and Iran.⁷

While the White House claims he has "fully divested from World Liberty Financial," Witkoff's proximity to outside business interests raises serious concerns of conflicts of interest.⁸ According to the New York Times, he made at least \$257 million from his business empire in 2025 while serving in his government role.⁹ These business activities raise serious concerns regarding how his personal financial interests overlap with his diplomatic role.

¹ Press Release, U.S. Department of State, *Secretary of State Marco Rubio Remarks to the Press* (July 23, 2026), <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/07/secretary-of-state-marco-rubio-remarks-to-the-press-15>

² Press Release, U.S. Department of State, *Secretary of State Marco Rubio with Brian Kilmeade on The Brian Kilmeade Show* (September 1, 2026), <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/09/secretary-of-state-marco-rubio-with-brian-kilmeade-on-the-brian-kilmeade-show>

³ Press Release, U.S. Department of State, *Meeting Between Special Envoy for Peace Steven Witkoff, Jared Kushner, Ukrainian Secretary of National Security and Defense Council Rustem Umerov, and Chief of General Staff General Andriy Hnatov* (December 5, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/12/meeting-between-special-envoy-for-peace-steven-witkoff-jared-kushner-ukrainian-secretary-of-national-security-and-defense-council-rustem-umerov-and-chief-of-general-staff-general-andriy-hnatov>

⁴ Eric Lipton, *Trump's Middle East Envoy Has Prior Ties to Oil-Rich Nations There*, New York Times (November 24, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/25/us/politics/witkoff-trump-middle-east-envoy.html>

⁵ Luke Fountain, *UAE 'spy sheikh' backs 49% stake in Trump family's crypto bank venture*, WSJ reports, CNBC (August 27, 2026), <https://www.cnbc.com/2026/08/27/uae-spy-sheikh-trump-family-crypto-bank.html>

⁶ Tahnoun bin Zayed meets Witkoff and Kushner, Emirates News Agency (October 22, 2025), <https://www.wam.ae/en/article/bmc043h-tahnoun-bin-zayed-meets-witkoff-and-kushner>

⁷ Barak Ravid, *Witkoff meets powerful UAE official amid crackdown on Iran*, Axios (September 2, 2026), <https://www.axios.com/2026/09/02/witkoff-uae-iran-war-trump-bessent>

⁸ Ben Protess & Andrea Fuller, *Trump's Special Envoy Hauled In More Than \$250 Million While in Government*, New York Times (September 10, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/10/us/politics/steve-witkoff-trump-crypto-world-liberty.html>

⁹ *Id.*

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The requested records will show the extent to which he is using taxpayer funds to pursue his private financial interests, a matter of significant 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 any documents it acquires from this request to the public through its website, 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 disseminates information obtained through FOIA to the public in several ways. For example, CREW's website receives over 150,000 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. These reports frequently rely on government records obtained through FOIA. CREW also posts the documents it obtains through FOIA on its website.

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

Conclusion

If you have any questions about this request or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records, please email me at [REDACTED] and foia@citizensforethics.org or call me at (202) 408-5565. 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 [REDACTED] and foia@citizensforethics.org or by mail to Rebecca Jacobs, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, P.O. Box 14596, Washington, D.C. 20044.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Jacobs
Research Manager