

October 6, 2017

By Facsimile: 202-566-0870

National Freedom of Information Officer
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear Freedom of Information 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. Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) regulations.

Specifically, CREW requests copies of all records for EPA-funded meals at non-governmental locations attended by Administrator Scott Pruitt from February 17, 2017, to the present. This request includes, but is not limited to, meals for which Administrator Pruitt sought reimbursement from the EPA or which he charged on a government-issued credit card.

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 emails to which the subjects of this request were cc’ed or bcc’ed.

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).

Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A) and DOI 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).

A recent *New York Times* article documents a host of industry meetings Administrator Pruitt has held, many of which included expensive meals at many “powerbroker” locations in Washington, D.C., such as the BLT Prime, a steakhouse within the Trump International Hotel in Washington.¹ Reportedly, many of the individuals with whom Administrator Pruitt met “have high-profile matters pending before the agency, with potentially hundreds of millions of dollars in regulatory costs at stake.” *Id.* The requested records will shed light on the extent to which the American taxpayers are funding lobbying efforts by outsiders seeking to influence EPA decisions and policies, and alternatively the extent to which Administrator Pruitt has been treated to meals paid for by those same outsiders while in his capacity as EPA Administrator.

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 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 a blog that reports on and analyzes newsworthy developments regarding government

¹ Eric Lipton and Lisa Friedman, *E.P.A. Chief’s Calendar: A Stream of Industry Meetings and Trips Home*, *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 2017, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/03/us/politics/epa-scott-pruitt-calendar-industries-coal-oil-environmentalists.html>.

National Freedom of Information Officer
October 6, 2017
Page 3

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 all documents it receives under the FOIA its website, which has been visited hundreds of thousands of times.

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 contact me at (202) 408-5565 or aweismann@citizensforethics.org. Also, if CREW's request for a fee waiver is not granted in full, 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 either at aweismann@citizensforethics.org or at Anne L. Weismann, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, 455 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne L. Weismann', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anne L. Weismann
Chief FOIA Counsel