



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Board of Veterans' Appeals
Washington DC 20420

In Reply Refer To:
18-12595-F

October 16, 2018

Anne L. Weismann
CREW/Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
455 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms. Weismann:

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated September 10, 2018, which was sent to the FOIA Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs, received by that office on September 11, 2018 and referred to my office on September 19, 2018. Your request is for the following:

1. Copies of records sufficient to show all travel taken or planned by all presidentially-appointed Senate confirmed ("PAS") officials in the VA to any event attended by a sitting member of the United States House of Representatives in that member's district between May 1, 2018 through November 6, 2018.
2. Copies of records sufficient to show all the political events to which PAS officials in the VA traveled from January 20, 2017 to the present, identifying the event, agency participants, and the costs of each trip.
3. Copies of records sufficient to show all the political events PAS officials in the VA are scheduled to attend in 2018, including but not limited to those events expected to have mixed travel, i.e., travel for official and political purposes, identifying the event, agency participants, and anticipated costs of each scheduled trip.
4. Copies of records sufficient to show the formula the VA uses to apportion costs incurred during travel that has both official and political components.
5. Copies of all records concerning how the VA ensures compliance with the Hatch Act's restrictions on political travel.

You asked that we search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. You are seeking records of any kind, including paper records, electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, data, and graphical material. You wish to have included 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. Your request includes any attachments to emails and other records, as well as those who were cc'ed or bcc'ed on any emails.

The Board of Veterans' Appeals has one PAS employee, Cheryl L. Mason, the Chairman of the Board. Ms. Mason was sworn in on December 11, 2017. From January 20, 2017 to December 11, 2017, the position of the Chairman was vacant.

My search produced a four-page travel voucher describing the Chairman's trip to attend the Congressional Veterans and Service Officer Seminar, hosted by Congressman Larry Bucshon, MD, from August 7 to August 8, 2018. Attached please find the Agenda for the meeting and a copy of that voucher, redacted pursuant to exemption b6 of the FOIA to prevent a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, and exemption b5.

5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(5) exempts from disclosure "inter-agency or intra-agency memorandums or letters which would not be available by law to a party other than an agency in litigation with the agency." The government is entitled to redact confidential government information given "the sensitivity of the commercial secrets involved, and the harm that would be inflicted upon the Government by premature disclosure." Federal Open Market Committee v. Merrill, 443 U.S. 340, 363 (1979). Here the redacted information is accounting codes and labels. The release of this information might expose the government to hacking liabilities, banking or wire fraud, and financial security risks.

This voucher and the enclosed agenda of the meeting the Chairman attended are the only documents in the Board's possession found to be responsive to your requests numbered 1, 2 and 3. The Board has no records responsive to your fourth and fifth requests.

With the redactions and lack of responsive records, I consider this to be a partial grant of your request. If you are unsatisfied with this response, please know that as part of the 2007 FOIA amendments, the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) was created to offer mediation services. Similarly, as part of the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, VA established a FOIA Public Liaison to offer mediation services. Both OGIS and the VA Public Liaison will assist in resolving disputes between FOIA requesters and VA as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. Using OGIS or the VA FOIA Public Liaison does not affect your right to pursue litigation. You may contact OGIS or the VA Public Liaison in any of the following ways:

October 16, 2018

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Office of Government Information Services E-mail: ogis@nara.gov
National Archives and Records Administration Telephone: 202-741-5770
Room 2510 Facsimile: 202-741-5769
8601 Adelphi Road Toll-free: 1-877-684-6448
College Park, MD 20740-6001

VA FOIA Public Liaison E-mail: vacofiaservice@va.gov
John Buck Telephone: 1-877-750-3642
Director, VA FOIA Service Facsimile: 202-632-7581
810 Vermont Avenue, NW (005R1C)
Washington, DC 20420

You may appeal by writing to the Chief Counsel, Information Law Group (024), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420. Your appeal must be received within 90 calendar days of the date of this letter. 5 U.S.C.A. § (a) 6 (A) (i) (III) (aa). Please state clearly why you disagree with the determination of this office.

Sincerely,

Margaret L. Peak

Margaret L. Peak
FOIA/Privacy Officer

Document Header Information

Document Type:	Voucher	Document Name:	VCH18148834
Travel Authorization Number:	101F84851	Trip Name:	Congressional Veterans and Service Officer Seminar-Trip from Washington to Louisville & Evansville, IN
TA Date:	08/09/18	Currency:	USD
Organization:	VAVACO 101 BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS	Current Status:	PAID
Purpose:	SITE VISIT	Document Detail:	Congressional Veterans and Service Officer Seminar TDY Date 08/07/2018-08/08/2018
Type Code:	REGULAR TDY		

Traveler Profile

Name:	Mason, Cheryl L.	ID:	(b) (6)
TID:	MASONCL	Organization:	VAVACO 101 BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS
Title:	Chief Veterans Law Jud	Duty Station:	
Security Cl:		Card:	IBA HLDR NON EXEMPT
Office Address:	810 VERMONT AVENUE NW WASHINGTON, DC 20420	EMAIL:	(b) (6) @va.gov
Office Phone:	202-632-(b) (6)	Cell Phone:	
Home Address:	(b) (6)	Home Phone:	(b) (6)
Alternate Address:		Alternate Phone:	

Document Information

Trip Number:	1			
Purpose:	Congressional Veterans and Service Officer Seminar TDY Date 08/07/2018-08/08/2018			
Itinerary Locations				
From	To	Itinerary Location	Purpose	Per Diem Rates
08/07/18	08/08/18	EVANSVILLE, IN	SITE VISIT	93.00 / 51.00

Document Totals

Total Expenses:	987.61
Reimbursable Expenses:	369.66
Non-Reimbursable Expenses:	617.95
Advance Applied:	.00
Net to Traveler:	76.50
Net to Government:	617.95
Pay to Charge Card:	293.16

Document Totals by Expense Category

Expense Category	Cost	Advance Amount
Com. Carrier	568.90	.00
Lodging-Per Diem	106.95	.00
M&IE-Per Diem	76.50	.00
Misc Expense	19.70	.00
Parking	12.00	.00
Rental Car	154.51	.00
Transxn Fees	49.05	.00
Total Expenses:	987.61	.00

Trip 1 Details**Reservations Summary**

Reservation Type	Vendor	Ticket#	Location	Cost
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COMM-CARR	United	1004385758	568.90
COMM-CARR	United	1004385758	.00
LODGE	Doubletree	1004385758	Evansville,IN 93.00

Trip Itinerary

From: IAD-Washington, DC (USA) (Dulles Apt) TO: SDF-Louisville, KY (USA) (Standiford Fie

Air

Tuesday August 07, 2018

IAD-Washington, DC (USA) to SDF-Louisville, KY (USA)

Aug 07 United 4999 Duration: 1 Hour 55 Minutes Nonstop
 Washington, DC (USA) (Dulles Apt) 08/07/2018 8:40AM Louisville, KY (USA) (Standiford Field) 08/07/2018 10:35AM
 Confirmation Number: M37N2V

Flight Information
 Distance 450 miles
 No Seat Assigned

Emissions 175.5 lbs of CO2
 Cost 568.90 USD

IAD-Washington, DC (USA) to SDF-Louisville, KY (USA)

Aug 07 United 4999 Duration: 1 Hour 55 Minutes Nonstop
 Washington, DC (USA) (Dulles Apt) 08/07/2018 8:40AM Louisville, KY (USA) (Standiford Field) 08/07/2018 10:35AM
 Confirmation Number: M37N2V

Flight Information
 Distance 450 miles
 No Seat Assigned

Emissions 175.5 lbs of CO2
 Cost 568.90 USD

Hotel

Doubletree

601 Walnut Street Evansville IN 47708 812-423-5002

Aug 07 Checking in: 08/07/2018 Checking out: 08/08/2018
 Total Rate: 93.00 USD

Doubletree

601 Walnut Street Evansville IN 47708 812-423-5002

Aug 07 Checking in: 08/07/2018 Checking out: 08/08/2018
 Total Rate: 93.00 USD

Air

Wednesday August 08, 2018

SDF-Louisville, KY (USA) to IAD-Washington, DC (USA)

Aug 08 United 3772 Duration: 1 Hour 39 Minutes Nonstop
 Louisville, KY (USA) (Standiford Field) 08/08/2018 2:45PM Washington, DC (USA) (Dulles Apt) 08/08/2018 4:24PM
 Confirmation Number: M37N2V

Flight Information
 Distance 450 miles
 No Seat Assigned

Emissions 175.5 lbs of CO2

SDF-Louisville, KY (USA) to IAD-Washington, DC (USA)

Aug 08 United 3772 Duration: 1 Hour 39 Minutes Nonstop
 Louisville, KY (USA) (Standiford Field) 08/08/2018 2:45PM Washington, DC (USA) (Dulles Apt) 08/08/2018 4:24PM
 Confirmation Number: M37N2V

Flight Information
 Distance 450 miles
 No Seat Assigned

Emissions 175.5 lbs of CO2

Expenses

Trip#: 1		Total Non-Per Diem Expenses:	818.11	Total Per Diem Expenses:	169.50
Date	Description	Category	Cost	Pay Method	Per Diem
08/02/2018	Travel Fee	Transxn Fees	34.30	CBA	
Comment:	SB ATRS Domestic w-Air-Rail				
08/07/2018	Airline Flight	Com. Carrier	568.90	CBA	
08/07/2018	Lodging	Lodging-Per Diem	93.00	IBA	*
Comment:	Conf Num: 96909925 Cmt:				
08/07/2018	Hotel Taxes	Lodging-Per Diem	13.95	IBA	

08/07/2018	M&IE	M&IE-Per Diem	38.25	OTHER	*
08/07/2018	Parking - Hotel	Parking	12.00	IBA	
08/07/2018	Rental Car	Rental Car	154.51	IBA	
08/08/2018	M&IE	M&IE-Per Diem	38.25	OTHER	*
08/08/2018	Gasoline	Misc Expense	19.70	IBA	
08/09/2018	TDY Voucher Fee	Transxn Fees	14.75	CBA	

Per Diem Allowances

Trip#: 1 Total Per Diem Allowances: 169.50

Date	Rate	Ldg Cost	Ldg Allowed	M&IE Cost	M&IE Allowed	B L D Conf%
08/07/2018	93.00/ 51.00	93.00	93.00	38.25	38.25	
08/08/2018	93.00/ 51.00	0.00	0.00	38.25	38.25	

Account Summary for the Selected Trip

Org: VAVACO 101 BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS	Label: (b) (5)	Acct Code: (b) (5)	987.61
Expense Category: Com. Carrier	Fiscal Year: 2018	Amount: 568.90	
Expense Category: Lodging-Per Diem	Fiscal Year: 2018	Amount: 106.95	
Expense Category: M&IE-Per Diem	Fiscal Year: 2018	Amount: 76.50	
Expense Category: Misc Expense	Fiscal Year: 2018	Amount: 19.70	
Expense Category: Parking	Fiscal Year: 2018	Amount: 12.00	
Expense Category: Rental Car	Fiscal Year: 2018	Amount: 154.51	
Expense Category: Transxn Fees	Fiscal Year: 2018	Amount: 49.05	
Total:			987.61

Payment Detail Information

Organization	Label	Accounting String	Payment Method	Amount
VAVACO 101 BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS	(b) (5)	(b) (5) 18/2172	CBA	617.95
VAVACO 101 BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS	(b) (5)	(b) (5) 18/2172	IBA	293.16
VAVACO 101 BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS	(b) (5)	(b) (5) 18/2172	OTHER	76.50
Totals by Label				
VAVACO 101 BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS	(b) (5)	(b) (5) 18/2172		987.61

Totals by Payment Method

CBA Total	617.95
IBA Total	293.16
OTHER Total	76.50

Attachments

Attachments Exist

Receipt Checklist

Date	Description	Cost
08/07/18	AIR Airline Flight	\$568.90
08/07/18	Lodging	\$93.00
08/07/18	Hotel Taxes	\$13.95
08/07/18	Parking - Hotel	\$12.00
08/07/18	RENT Rental Car	\$154.51
08/08/18	Gasoline	\$19.70

Audits

Audit Name	Result	Reason
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EXPENSE EXIST Rental FAIL A Rental Car exists on the document. Justification for rental car must be included with this document.
Car

Traveler Rental Car authorized due to additional traveler attending-which results to being cost advantageous to
Justification: the government.

Document History 09/25/2018 Voucher: VCH18148834

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STATUS	DATE	TIME	SIGNATURE NAME	REASON
CREATED	08/09/2018	12:37PMEST	(b) (6)	
SIGNED	08/15/2018	11:47AMEST	Mason, Cheryl L.	
CERTIFIED	08/15/2018	12:20PMEST	(b) (6)	
COMPLETE	08/15/2018	12:32PMEST	(b) (6)	
PENDING	08/15/2018	12:32PMEST	SYSUTILITY	
PAID	08/15/2018	12:33PMEST	User1, EAI	

I certify that the electronic signatures listed above are valid and on file

SIGNED DATE

Document Signatures

Traveler/Preparer Name:

Traveler/Preparer Signature: _____

Date: _____

Approver Name: _____

Approver Signature: _____

Date: _____

VETERANS' SEMINAR & RESOURCE FAIR

Hosted by:
Congressman Larry Bucshon, MD

Date: Wednesday, August 8, 2018
Time: 8:30am- 12:00pm CT
Location: Old Post Office Plaza,
100 NW 2nd Street
Evansville, IN 47708

Agenda

7:30am – 8:15am	Vendor Table Set-Up	
8:30am	Doors Open for All Attendees	
9:00am	Welcome	Congressman Larry Bucshon
9:05am – 9:15am	Pledge of Allegiance Opening Prayer	
9:15am - 10:15am	Appeals Modernization	Chairman Cheryl L Mason, Board of Veterans Appeals Director David McLenachan, Appeals Management Office
10:15am – 10:45am	Transition Assistance	Cpt. Sarah Cline Transition Assistance Advisor
10:45am - 11:45am	Panel with Regional Offices & National Cemetery Administration	Mr. Michael Fairchild, Acting Director, Louisville Regional Office Indianapolis Regional Office Milwaukee Pension Management Center Ms. Deborah Kendrick, National Cemetery Administration
12:00pm	Event Concludes	

