

July 10, 2019

**BY EMAIL: EFOIA@uscg.mil**

Commandant (CG-611)  
ATTN FOIA Officer  
U.S. Coast Guard Stop 7710  
2703 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE  
Washington, D.C. 20593-7710

Re: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear FOIA Officer,

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

Specifically, CREW requests the following:

1. Copies of all records sufficient to show all sources of funding, including but not limited to appropriated funds and gifts, associated with Salute to America.
2. Copies of all records sufficient to show the costs associated with the production and dissemination of the video President Trump tweeted regarding the event on July 4, 2019, available here: <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1146981084531441664>.<sup>1</sup>
3. Copies of all communications between Coast Guard and Republican National Committee officials regarding Salute to America or the video referenced above.
4. Copies of all communications between Coast Guard and Donald J. Trump for President, Inc. officials regarding Salute to America or the video referenced above.

Please search for records created between January 1, 2019 to the date Coast Guard conducts the search.

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). If some portions of the requested records are properly

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<sup>1</sup> Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Twitter (July 4, 2019), <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1146981084531441664>.

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 Coast Guard 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).

The requested records are likely to contribute to greater public understanding of the costs Coast Guard incurred related to Salute to America. There is significant public interest in these records given that federal dollars funded the event despite its political elements. The Trump campaign's promotion of Salute to America<sup>2</sup> and the VIP access Republican National Committee officials and other Trump supporters received via a ticketed area<sup>3</sup> each betrayed Salute to America's political nature at a historically nonpartisan celebration of America's birthday.

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](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

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<sup>2</sup> *See* Attachment 1.

<sup>3</sup> Kevin Liptak and Sarah Westwood, [Trump's political allies receive VIP tickets for July 4<sup>th</sup> show](https://cnn.it/307137d), CNN, July 3, 2019, available at <https://cnn.it/307137d>.

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, and those documents have 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 [REDACTED]. 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 [REDACTED] or at Meredith Lerner, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, 1101 K Street, N.W., Suite 201, Washington, D.C. 20005. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,



Meredith Lerner  
Research Associate

Encl.

Attachment 1

