



December 8, 2017

By Electronic Mail (ICE-FOIA@dhs.gov)

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Freedom of Information Act Office
500 12th Street, S.W., Stop 5009
Washington, D.C. 20536-5009
ICE-FOIA@dhs.gov

RE: Freedom of Information Act Request

Dear FOIA Officer:

The Campaign Legal Center ("CLC") submits this request pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552 *et seq.*, for the operations and management agreements between GEO Corrections Holdings, Inc., and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") regarding the Northwest Detention Facility in Tacoma, Washington.

I. Background

A collective bargaining agreement dated November 19, 2016 between ICE and GEO Corrections Holdings, Inc., stated that:

GEO Corrections Holdings, Inc., manages the Northwest Detention Facility located in Tacoma, Washington under the terms of an operations and management agreement with the United States Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) hereinafter referred to as the "Client." As the management agent for the Contract Agency (s), the terms of this document are governed by Company's contract(s) and standards established by the Clients. ¹

¹ *Northwest Detention Facility Collective Bargaining Agreement Between GEO Corrections Holdings, Inc. (GEO) And United Government Security Officers of America International Union, and its Local #883*, (Nov 19, 2016), <http://local883.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/NWDC-FINAL-with-Signature-Page-12-1-2016-1.pdf>.

Since November 2016, GEO Group, Inc., GEO Corrections Holdings, Inc., their facilities, and their agreements with ICE have been the subject of sustained media interest.²

Furthermore, the Northwest Detention Center itself has received considerable public interest and media attention, particularly this year.³ This interest has included regular coverage of a recent lawsuit by the State of Washington against GEO Group, Inc., in its capacity as operator of the Northwest Detention Center.⁴

II. Requested Records

This request encompasses:

- All operations and management agreements between ICE and GEO Corrections Holdings, Inc., regarding the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington;
- Any other agreements or contracts between ICE and GEO Corrections Holdings, Inc., regarding the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, Washington.

This request encompasses both digital and physical records.

If some portions of the requested records are exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records. 5 U.S.C. § 552(b). If any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, please provide an index of the withheld materials as required under *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973), cert. denied, 415 U.S. 977 (1972).

III. Application for Fee Waiver or Limitation of Fees

² See, e.g., Amy Brittain and Drew Harwell, *Private-prison giant, resurgent in Trump era, gathers at president's resort*, WASH. POST (Oct. 25, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/with-business-booming-under-trump-private-prison-giant-gathers-at-presidents-resort/2017/10/25/b281d32c-adee-11e7-a908-a3470754bbb9_story.html?utm_term=.1793d865333f;

³ See, e.g., Kenny Ocker, *100-plus immigrants detained in Tacoma on hunger strike, activists say*, THE NEWS TRIBUNE (Apr. 10, 2017), <http://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article143832854.html>; Tim Henderson, *Detention Push Ignites New Deportation Battles*, HUFFINGTON POST (Nov. 17, 2017), https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/detention-push-ignites-new-deportation-battles_us_5a0efdaae4b0e30a9585063c.

⁴ See, e.g., Gene Johnson, *Detention center contractor asks judge to toss lawsuit over \$1-a-day pay*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Nov. 20, 2017), <http://komonews.com/news/local/detention-center-contractor-asks-judge-to-toss-lawsuit-over-1-a-day-pay>; Gene Johnson, *Judge: State can sue detention center over inmate pay*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Dec. 6, 2017), <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/judge-allows-washington-states-lawsuit-over-detainee-pay-to-proceed/>.

A. The request is made for non-commercial purposes and will contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of government.

FOIA provides that the agency shall furnish requested records without or at reduced charge if “disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii).

As described above in Part I, the requested materials involve matters of significant public interest. Records likely to be disclosed in response to this request will contribute significantly to the public’s understanding of how decisions about the allocation of taxpayer funds for federal contracts are made. These details are not already publicly available and the records would provide a more thorough public understanding of the operations of the government.

CLC will use records responsive to this request in the creation of widely disseminated materials and analysis that will educate the public about these matters and the operations of the government. CLC anticipates analyzing the materials gathered through this FOIA request to develop reports,⁵ write blogs,⁶ and author op-eds.⁷ CLC’s research and reports are widely disseminated on its blog,⁸ through its own website,⁹ through social media platforms like Facebook¹⁰ and Twitter,¹¹ and regular emails to its supporters, among other communications outlets.¹²

⁵ See, e.g., Lawrence M. Noble and Brendan M. Fischer, *Funding the Presidential Nominating Conventions: How a Trickle of Money Turned Into a Flood*, Campaign Legal Center (July 26, 2016), <http://www.campaignlegalcenter.org/sites/default/files/Funding%20the%20Presidential%20Nominating%20Conventions%20Report.pdf>.

⁶ See, e.g., Brendan M. Fischer, *How Trump’s Plan to Repeal the Johnson Amendment Could Unleash ‘Super Dark Money’ Into Our Elections*, Campaign Legal Center blog (Feb. 3, 2017), <http://www.campaignlegalcenter.org/news/blog/how-trump-s-plan-repeal-johnson-amendment-could-unleash-super-dark-money-our-elections>; *Filling the Swamp: Inauguration and Transition Funding*, Campaign Legal Center blog (Jan. 19, 2017), <http://www.campaignlegalcenter.org/news/blog/filling-swamp-inauguration-and-transition-funding>;

⁷ See, e.g., Trevor Potter, *Donald Trump Hasn’t Solved Any of His Conflicts of Interest*, WASH. POST (Jan. 11, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2017/01/11/donald-trump-hasnt-solved-any-of-his-conflicts-of-interest/?utm_term=.0e80b538fb8f.

⁸ See Campaign Legal Center blog at <http://www.campaignlegalcenter.org/news/262>.

⁹ See Campaign Legal Center “Reference Materials” library, <http://www.campaignlegalcenter.org/research/reference-materials>.

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/CampaignLegalCenter/>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/CampaignLegal>

¹² See Campaign Legal Center blog at MEDIUM, <https://medium.com/clc-blog>.

CLC staff have significant knowledge in ethics and government accountability, and news media regularly rely upon CLC's analysis and expertise.¹³ In addition to its own blogs and reports, CLC anticipates analyzing the requested records and disseminating the materials among traditional news outlets.

Requester CLC is a non-profit public interest organization organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and this request is made for non-commercial purposes.

As such, we request that any applicable fees associated with this request be waived pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). A fee waiver in this instance would fulfill Congress' intent in amending the FOIA. *See Judicial Watch, Inc. v. Rossotti*, 326 F.3d 1309, 1312 (D.C. Cir. 2003) ("Congress amended FOIA to ensure that it be liberally construed in favor of waivers for noncommercial requesters." (quotation marks omitted)).

B. CLC qualifies for a fee waiver as a "representative of the news media."

CLC additionally requests that it not be charged search or review fees for this request because the organization meets the definition of a "representative of the news media" for purposes of the FOIA, since CLC "gathers information of potential interest to a segment of the public, uses its editorial skills to turn the raw materials into a distinct work, and distributes that work to an audience." 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II)-(III).

As the D.C. Circuit has held, the "representative of the news media" test is focused on the requestor rather than the specific FOIA request. *Cause of Action v. F.T.C.*, 799 F.3d 1108, 1121 (D.C. Cir. 2015). CLC satisfies this test because (as noted in Part III(A)) CLC applies its expertise and editorial skills to turn raw materials into reports, articles, and op-eds that are widely disseminated on its blog,¹⁴ through its own website,¹⁵ through social media platforms and regular emails to its supporters,

¹³ See, e.g., Elizabeth Williamson, *Highflying Mnuchins Take the Country for a Ride*, N.Y. TIMES (Sept. 14, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/14/opinion/mnuchin-funds-honeymoon.html>; Walter M. Shaub, Jr., *Walter Shaub: How to Restore Government Ethics in the Trump Era*, N.Y. TIMES (July 18, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/18/opinion/walter-shaub-how-to-restore-government-ethics-in-the-trump-era.html>; Philip Bump, *Why Ben Carson's appearance in Phoenix was likely a violation of federal law*, WASHINGTON POST (Aug. 23, 2017), https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/politics/wp/2017/08/23/why-ben-carsons-appearance-in-phoenix-was-likely-a-violation-of-federal-law/?utm_term=.175a1f707481; Manu Raju, *Trump's Cabinet Pick Invested in Company, Then Introduced a Bill to Help It*, CNN (Jan. 17, 2017), <http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/16/politics/tom-price-bill-aiding-company/>; Christina Wilkie and Paul Blumenthal, *Trump Just Completely Entangled His Business and the U.S. Government*, HUFFINGTON POST (Jan. 11, 2017), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-business-conflicts-of-interests-treasury_us_5876928de4b092a6cae4ec7b

¹⁴ See Campaign Legal Center blog at <http://www.campaignlegalcenter.org/news/262>.

¹⁵ See Campaign Legal Center "Reference Materials" library, <http://www.campaignlegalcenter.org/research/reference-materials>.

and through other communications outlets.¹⁶ CLC additionally applies editorial skill to analyze and disseminate materials to other news media outlets, which regularly cite and rely upon CLC's work. The D.C. Circuit has held that an requester may qualify as a news media entity if it "distribute[s] [its] work' by issuing press releases to media outlets in order to reach the public indirectly" 799 F.3d. at 1125-26.

Courts have found that other organizations with functionally similar missions and engaged in similar public education activities qualify as "representatives of the news media," even if engaged in litigation or other advocacy beyond educating the public about the operations of government. *See e.g. Cause of Action v. F.T.C.*, 799 F.3d 1108, 1121-25 (D.C. Cir. 2015) (finding a public interest advocacy organization that comments to other media outlets about documents it obtains under FOIA a news media requester); *Judicial Watch, Inc. v. DOJ*, 133 F. Supp. 2d 52, 53-54 (D.D.C. 2000) (finding "public interest law firm" Judicial Watch a news media requester); *Elec. Privacy Info. Ctr. V. DOD*, 241 F. Supp. 2d 5, 10-15 (D.D.C. 2003) (finding nonprofit public interest group that published a biweekly email newsletter a news media requester).

"It is critical that the phrase 'representative of the news media' be interpreted broadly if the act is work as expected, . . . In fact, *any person or organization which regularly publishes or disseminates information to the public . . . should qualify for waivers as a 'representative of the news media.'*" 132 Cong. Rec. S14298 (daily ed. Sept. 30, 1986), cited in *Nat'l Sec. Archive v. U.S. Dep't of Def.*, 880 F.2d 1381, 1386 (D.C. Cir. 1989).

In the event the fee waiver is not granted, I may not be charged for the first two hours of search time, or for the first hundred pages of duplication. Please contact me and advise me of the cost of this request if processing costs exceed \$100.

IV. Application for Expedited Processing

I request that the processing of this request be expedited pursuant to 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e)(1)(iv).

As described in Part I, the subject of the request involves a matter of significant media interest.¹⁷

I certify that my statements concerning the need for expedited processing are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

* * *

In order to expedite delivery of these requested documents and in order to reduce possible fees incurred, I am requesting that these documents be delivered to me either digitally via email (in PDF format), or on a data disk via the U.S. Postal Service.

¹⁶ See Campaign Legal Center, MEDIUM, <https://medium.com/clc-blog>.

¹⁷ See sources cited *supra* at nn. 2-4.

Please email copies of responsive documents to:

mchrist@campaignlegalcenter.org

Or, please mail copies of responsive documents to:

**Maggie Christ
Campaign Legal Center
1411 K St NW, Suite 1400
Washington, D.C. 20005**

Should you elect, for any reason, to withhold, redact, or deny the release of any record responsive to this request, I request that you provide me with an explanation for each withholding/redaction, along with pertinent legal citations.

Please confirm receipt of this request and provide me with an estimate of processing time.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

/s/ Maggie Christ

Maggie Christ
Researcher/Investigator
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