

WHAT IS... THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT OR **FOIA?!**

HI, I'M
MAYAH AND
THIS IS MY
LIL' SIS,
BINA!

WE'RE GONNA
TELL YOU WHAT
WE'VE LEARNED
ABOUT **FOIA!**

CUZ
WE'RE ENVIRO-
HEROES!

PRESENTED BY





WHAT DOES FOIA DO?



RIGHT!
AND **FOIA**
GIVE US TWO
WAYS TO GET
INFORMATION.

1) **FOIA** REQUIRES FEDERAL AGENCIES TO SHARE INFORMATION ON THEIR WEBSITES. EACH AGENCY WEBSITE HAS AN ELECTRONIC READING ROOM--A VIRTUAL LIBRARY PACKED WITH INFORMATION. FOR EXAMPLE, THE EPA'S READING ROOM HAS A HUGE COLLECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STATISTICS, REPORTS, PERMITS, AND MORE.

--I GOT
A LIBRARY
CARD!



2) **FOIA** LETS YOU ASK AGENCIES FOR SPECIFIC RECORDS. ANYONE CAN SEND ANY FEDERAL AGENCY A REQUEST FOR A FEDERAL RECORD.

--THAT
MEANS YOU!



* EACH STATE ALSO HAS ITS OWN FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW (FOIL). YOU CAN USE YOUR STATE'S FOIL TO GET STATE RECORDS.

WE CAN USE **FOIA** TO FIND OUT IF THE FACTORY IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD USES HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS. AND, TO GET RECORDS ABOUT POLLUTION IN OUR AIR AND WATER.

HAHA...NICE!
WE CAN EVEN SEE THEIR VIOLATION HISTORY.

FOIA
THE GOOD
OF ALL.

ALL
KINDS OF
STUFF.



WHAT CAN YOU FOIA?

YOU CAN ONLY **FOIA**
RECORDS IN THE HANDS
OF A FEDERAL AGENCY.
Y'KNOW, LIKE THE
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION
AGENCY (EPA), THE
DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR (DOL) OR
THE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION
(DOE).



SO WHAT
ABOUT AN
OFFICIAL'S
EXPENSES?

JFK?

OR
INSPECTIONS?
VIOLATIONS?

PARALLEL
UNIVERSES?

MAPS AND
PLANNING?

ALIENS???



SO WHAT
ABOUT AN
OFFICIAL'S
EXPENSES?

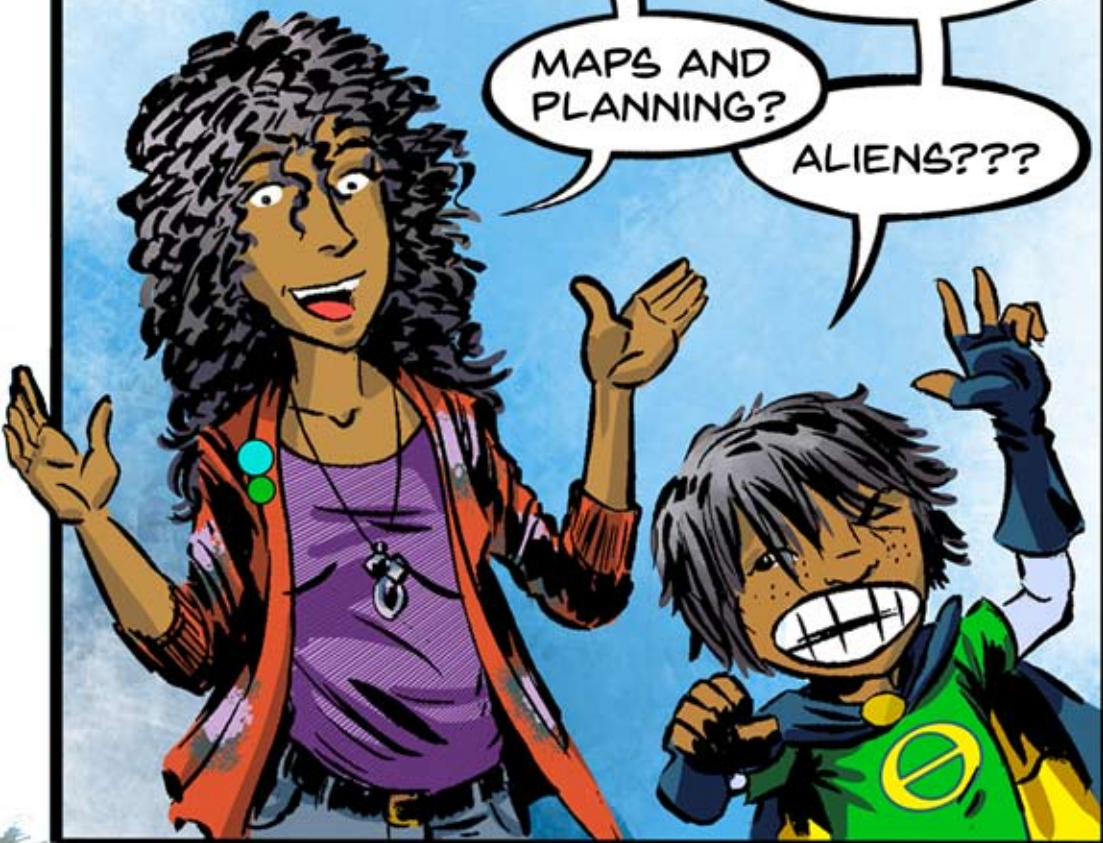
JFK?

OR
INSPECTIONS?
VIOLATIONS?

PARALLEL
UNIVERSES?

MAPS AND
PLANNING?

ALIENS???



Turns out
you can get
any or all of
those things.

So long as
information
already exists
in some kind of
record, you can
get it through
FOIA.

It can be many
different things.
You just need to
decide what specific
information would be
helpful and ask
for it.

WHAT YOU CAN FOIA

Books
Papers: including
spread sheets,
data (like census data)
and statistical analyses)
Emails
PDFs
Maps
Photos
Videos
Cassette/Audio tapes
CDs
Any other "machine
readable" materials

WHAT CAN'T YOU FOIA?

BUT...ONE
THING YOU
NEED TO
KNOW.

CLASSIFIED NATIONAL SECURITY RECORDS
(TOP SECRET THINGS)

**TRADE SECRETS OR
CONFIDENTIAL COMMERCIAL
INFORMATION**
(BUSINESS SECRETS)

**LAW ENFORCEMENT RECORDS
ABOUT ONGOING CASES**


**PRIVATE THINGS LIKE SOCIAL SECURITY
NUMBERS AND HOME ADDRESSES**

I DON'T
EVEN KNOW MY
SOCIAL SUGAR-ITTY
NUMBER.

Agencies
DO NOT
have to
CREATE
new records
for you.

PING



A comic panel with a light blue sky background. A woman with long, dark, curly hair and a red and black patterned cardigan over a purple shirt stands with her arms crossed. A young boy with shaggy brown hair, wearing a green shirt with a yellow 'e' and a blue cape, is gesturing with his hands while talking to her.

SO THEY
WON'T MAKE
NEW STUFF
FOR YOU?

NOPE.

AND IF
THE AGENCY STOPS
COLLECTING CERTAIN
DATA, THEY DON'T HAVE
TO START AGAIN JUST
CUZ YOU WANT
THEM TO.



****FUN
FACT**

SOMEONE
ONCE TRIED TO
FOIA THE BULLETS
FROM THE JFK
ASSASSINATION.

THERE ARE CON-
SPIRACY THEORISTS
WHO LOVE
FOIA--JFK
ASSASSINATION
BUFFS, AND
UFO/AREA 51
BELIEVERS.



OOOH...
U-F-OIA!!

HOW DO I SUBMIT A FOIA REQUEST?

- 1) Determine which agency has the records you need
(Remember, EPA, DOL, DOE, Etc?)
- 2) Write a precise request for the records (there are lots of sample requests online)
- 3) Submit the request—most agencies let you do it online
- 4) Be nice!



CAN
I DO IT
SUPER
SECRET...
ANONY-
MOUSLY?

KINDA,
SOMEONE ELSE
CAN DO IT FOR YOU.
YOU NEED TO GIVE AN
ADDRESS SO THEY KNOW
WHERE TO SEND THE
RECORDS. IT CAN
BE A P.O. BOX

BUT ... YOU
DON'T HAVE TO
GIVE A REASON
FOR YOUR
REQUEST.

AND, THE
AGENCY HAS
TO RESPOND
NO MATTER
WHO YOU
ARE.



WHAT'S
IT **COST**?
I DON'T
HAVE MUCH
ALLOWANCE
LEFT.

ACTUALLY,
IT'S OFTEN FREE
FOR EDUCATIONAL OR
NON-COMMERCIAL
REQUESTS.

IF THE RECORDS
ARE SUPER-LONG (LIKE
OVER 100 PAGES) YOU
MIGHT HAVE TO REQUEST
A FEE WAIVER.



WHEEW!
AND THAT'S
THE BASICS.

OH,
AND ALWAYS
REMEMBER TO
KISS YOUR
SUBMISSIONS.

BLECHHHH!

NO!
KEEP IT
SIMPLE AND
SPECIFIC!

HA
HA!

WE'LL BE
FOIA-EVER
INDEBTED!

End