

WHAT CAN'T YOU FOIA?

- 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

BUT... **ONE THING** YOU **NEED** TO KNOW.

Agencies **DO NOT** have to **CREATE** new records for you.

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

PING

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 CONSPIRACY THEORISTS WHO LOVE **FOIA**--JFK ASSASSINATION BUFFS, AND UFO/AREA 51 BELIEVERS.

OOOH... **U-F-O-I-A!!**

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!

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

CAN I DO IT SUPER SECRET... ANONYMOUSLY?

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.

NO! KEEP IT SIMPLE AND SPECIFIC!

HA HA!

WE'LL BE **FOIA-EVER** INDEBTED! **End**

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!

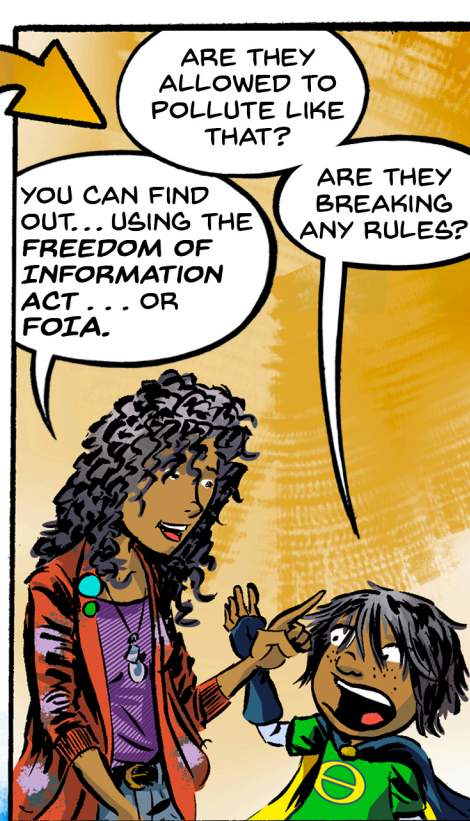
PRESENTED BY **CUER**



WE LIVE IN FORESTVILLE AND WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT THE BLACK SMOKE COMING FROM THE LOCAL FACTORY.

IT'S GROSS. THE AIR IS HAZY.

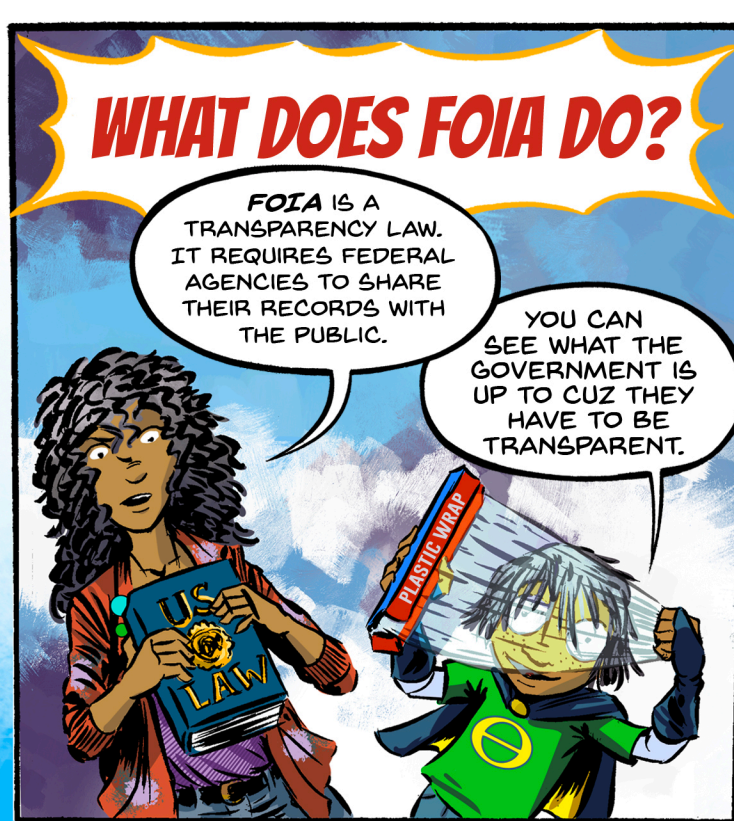
SOMETIMES WE DON'T PLAY OUTSIDE.



YOU CAN FIND OUT... USING THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT... OR FOIA.

ARE THEY ALLOWED TO POLLUTE LIKE THAT?

ARE THEY BREAKING ANY RULES?



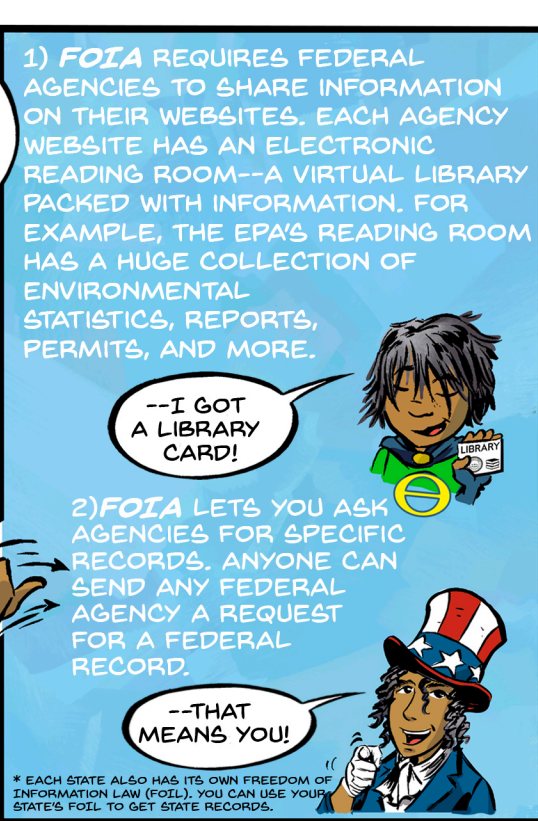
WHAT DOES FOIA DO?

FOIA IS A TRANSPARENCY LAW. IT REQUIRES FEDERAL AGENCIES TO SHARE THEIR RECORDS WITH THE PUBLIC.

YOU CAN SEE WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS UP TO CUZ THEY HAVE TO BE TRANSPARENT.



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



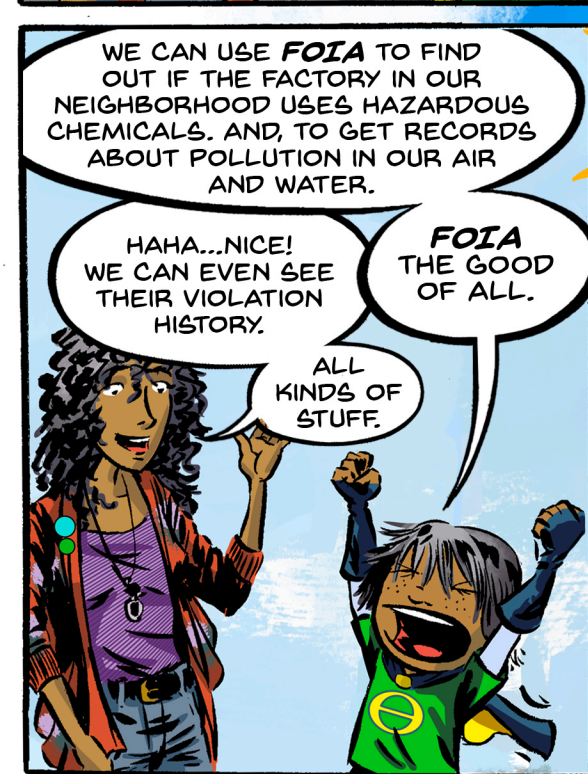
1) FOIA REQUIRES FEDERAL AGENCIES TO SHARE INFORMATION ON THEIR WEBSITES. EACH AGENCY WEBSITE HAS AN ELECTRONIC READING ROOM--A VIRTUAL LIBRARY PACKED WITH INFORMATION. FOR EXAMPLE, THE EPA'S READING ROOM HAS A HUGE COLLECTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STATISTICS, REPORTS, PERMITS, AND MORE.

--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.

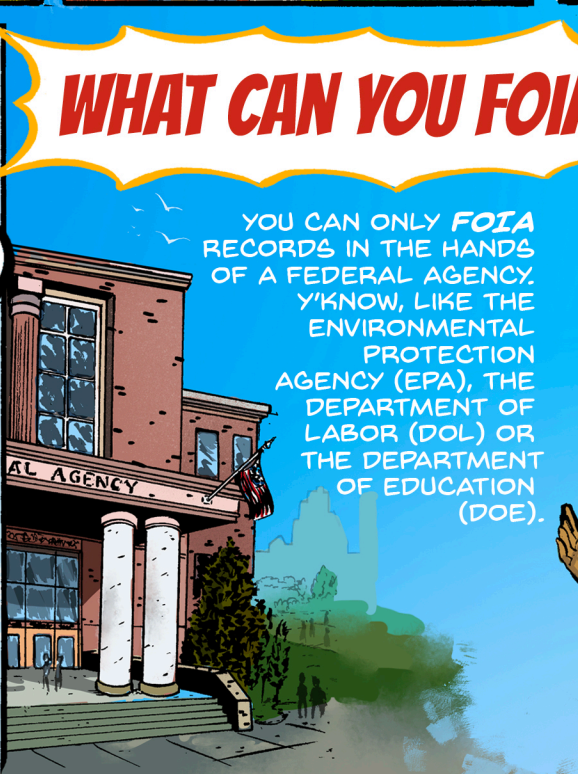


WE CAN USE FOIA TO FIND OUT IF THE FACTORY IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD USES HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS. AND, TO GET RECORDS ABOUT POLLUTION IN OUR AIR AND WATER.

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?

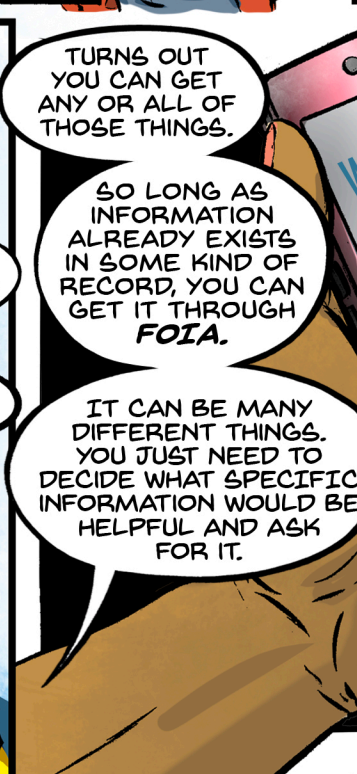
JFK?

OR INSPECTIONS? VIOLATIONS?

PARALLEL UNIVERSES?

MAPS AND PLANNING?

ALIENS???



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