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.

ARE THEY ALLOWED TO POLLUTE LIKE THAT?

ARE THEY BREAKING ANY RULES?

aren't they breaking ANY RULES?

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

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!

WHAT CAN YOU FOIA?

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.

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?

Or INSPECTIONS? VIOLATIONS?

MAPS AND PLANNING?

PARALLEL UNIVERSES?

ALIENS???

JFK?

SO LONG AS INFORMATION ALREADY EXISTS IN SOME KIND OF RECORD, YOU CAN GET IT THROUGH FOIA.

IT CAN BE ANYTHING DIFFERENT THINGS. YOU JUST NEED TO DECIDE WHAT SPECIFIC FORMATION WOULD BE HELPFUL AND ASK FOR IT.

TURN'S OUT YOU CAN GET ANY OR ALL OF THOSE THINGS.

WHAT YOU CAN FOIA

Books
Papers, including
drafted sheets,
data (like census data)
and statistical analyses)

Emails
PDFs
Maps
Photos
Videos
Cassette/Audio tapes
CDs
Any other "machine
readable" materials

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