

THE FEDERAL LABOR RELATIONS AUTHORITY FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA) BACKLOG REDUCTION PLAN

A. Introduction

On June 26, 2008, the Office of Information and Privacy, Department of Justice, directed agencies to develop a FOIA backlog reduction plan if: (1) they had not reduced their FOIA backlogs between Fiscal Years (FY) 2005 and 2007; or (2) the number of pending requests as of July 9, 2008 was not lower than those pending at the end of FY 2005. Although the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) has made progress on reducing its FOIA backlog, it was greater in both time periods than the backlog measured at the end of FY 2005. Since the July 9th cutoff date, the FLRA has responded to a number of backlogged requests and is in the process of taking other steps to remedy the backlog which are outlined below.

B. FLRA Backlog Plan Objectives

The first overall objective is to reduce the backlog of pending requests. The next objective is to process all incoming FOIA requests within the twenty day statutory time period. In order to accomplish these objectives, the FLRA has focused attention on the following:

1. Identifying and tracking backlogged FOIA requests

To accomplish the first objective, the Office of the Solicitor, which has the oldest FOIA requests in the FLRA, prepared a table identifying the more difficult and/or oldest pending requests. On a weekly basis the table is updated with information on the status, next action required, and due dates for these requests. Further, requesters will be contacted to determine if they are still interested in the requested information.

2. Monitor and alert mechanism to insure timely processed FOIA requests

In conjunction with implementing an agency-wide electronic FOIA tracking system, the FLRA will accomplish the second objective by setting controls within the tracking system to monitor and provide timely alerts to FOIA processing offices before the twenty day time limit elapses.

C. Execution of the Plan

The first objective, to reduce the backlog of pending requests, is being accomplished. At the end of FY 2007 the agency had 14 pending FOIA requests. As a result of the FLRA's efforts to identify and closely monitor its FOIA backlog, the agency has closed 8 of the backlogged requests. In another backlogged request, a requester was provided a partial response. Further, the Solicitor's Office, which has the oldest remaining FOIA requests in the agency, is in the process of contacting requesters to

determine if they are still interested in receiving the requested information. The office anticipates this task will be completed by October 2008.

As to its second objective, to process all incoming FOIA requests within the twenty day statutory time period, FLRA personnel recently met with private vendors of FOIA case tracking systems. The FLRA is in the process of assessing considerations which will lead to a selection of an agency-wide tracking system. One consideration that will be involved in the selection of a tracking system is its ability to track the twenty day time period for FOIA responses and provide timely alerts to FOIA processing offices.