

# **U.S. Office of Government Ethics Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Freedom of Information Act Report [01/22/09]**

## **I. BASIC INFORMATION REGARDING REPORT**

1. OGE's contact person for questions about this OGE Annual FOIA Report for Fiscal Year 2008 (10/01/07-09/30/08): William E. Gressman, OGE FOIA Officer, Office of Government Ethics, Suite 500, 1201 New York Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20005-3917, Tel: 202-482-9245; TDD: 202-482-9293; FAX: 202-482-9237; E-mail: [usoge@oge.gov](mailto:usoge@oge.gov).
2. The electronic link for access to this Report in the FOIA section of OGE's Internet Website is: <http://www.usoge.gov>.
3. A copy of this Report in paper form can be obtained by downloading it from OGE's Website (see Section I.2. above) or by requesting a copy from OGE's contact person (see Section I.1. above).

## **II. MAKING A FOIA REQUEST**

1. As a small agency, OGE handles all FOIA requests at the agency level by submission to its contact person (see Section I.1. above); OGE does not have any separate agency components that receive FOIA requests, and this Report just shows information for OGE overall.
2. After searching, OGE at times does not locate any responsive records. Moreover, some requests are not granted in full or in part because access is sought to records containing exempt personal information, including personal financial information, or records constituting predecisional deliberative process material. OGE does not have general categories of the agency's records to which the FOIA exemptions apply.

## **III. ACRONYMS, DEFINITIONS, AND EXEMPTIONS**

1. The following agency-specific acronyms are used in this Report.
  - a. **FOIA** – Freedom of Information Act ([5 U.S.C. § 552](#)).
  - b. **FY** – Fiscal Year.
  - c. **OGE** – Office of Government Ethics.
  - d. **PA** – Privacy Act ([5 U.S.C. § 552a](#)).
2. The following definitions of terms are used in this Report:

- a. **Administrative Appeal** – a request to a federal agency asking that it review at a higher administrative level a FOIA determination made by the agency at the initial request level.
- b. **Average Number** – the number obtained by dividing the sum of a group of numbers by the quantity of numbers in the group. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the average number is 8.
- c. **Backlog** – the number of requests or administrative appeals that are pending at an agency at the end of the fiscal year that are beyond the statutory time period for a response.
- d. **Component** – for agencies that process requests on a decentralized basis, a “component” is an entity, also sometimes referred to as an Office, Division, Bureau, Center, or Directorate, within the agency that processes FOIA requests. The FOIA now requires that agencies include in their Annual FOIA Report data for both the agency overall and for each principal component of the agency. As noted, as a small agency, OGE does not have any FOIA components, and so the information provided in this report is just for OGE overall.
- e. **Consultation** – the procedure whereby the agency responding to a FOIA request first forwards a record to another agency for its review because that other agency has an interest in the document. Once the agency in receipt of the consultation finishes its review of the record, it responds back to the agency that forwarded it. That agency, in turn, will then respond to the FOIA requester.
- f. **Exemption 3 Statute** – a federal statute that exempts information from disclosure and which the agency relies on to withhold information under subsection (b)(3) of the FOIA.
- g. **FOIA Request** – a FOIA request is generally a request to a federal agency for access to records concerning another person (i.e., a “third-party” request), or concerning an organization, or a particular topic of interest. FOIA requests also include requests made by requesters seeking records concerning themselves (i.e., “first-party” requests) when those requesters are not subject to the Privacy Act, such as non-U.S. citizens. Moreover, because all first-party requesters should be afforded the benefit of both the access provisions of the FOIA as well as those of the Privacy Act, FOIA requests also include any first-party requests where an agency determines that it must search beyond its Privacy Act “systems of records” or where a Privacy Act exemption applies, and the agency looks to FOIA to afford the greatest possible access. All requests which require the agency to utilize the FOIA in responding to the requester are included in this Report.

Additionally, a FOIA request includes records referred to the agency for processing and direct response to the requester. It does not, however, include records for which the agency has received a consultation from another agency. (Consultations are reported separately in Section XII of this Report.)

- h. **Full Grant** – an OGE decision to disclose all records in full in response to a FOIA request.
- i. **Full Denial** – an OGE decision not to release any records in response to a FOIA request because the records are exempt in their entireties under one or more of the FOIA exemptions, or because of a procedural reason, such as when no records could be located.
- j. **Median Number** – the middle, not average, number. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the median number is 7.
- k. **Multi-Track Processing** – a system in which simple requests requiring relatively minimal review are placed in one processing track and more voluminous and complex requests are placed in one or more other tracks. Requests granted expedited processing are placed in yet another track. Requests in each track are processed on a first in/first out basis.
  - i. **Expedited Processing** – an agency will process a FOIA request on an expedited basis when a requester satisfies the requirements for expedited processing as set forth in the statute and in agency regulations.
  - ii. **Simple Request** – a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in its fastest (non-expedited) track based on the low volume and/or simplicity of the records requested.
  - iii. **Complex Request** – a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in a slower track based on the high volume and/or complexity of the records requested.
- l. **Partial Grant/Partial Denial** – in response to a FOIA request, an agency decision to disclose portions of the records and to withhold other portions that are exempt under the FOIA, or to otherwise deny a portion of the request for a procedural reason.
- m. **Pending Request or Pending Administrative Appeal** – a request or administrative appeal for which an agency has not taken final action in all respects.

- n. **Perfected Request** – a request for records which reasonably describes such records and is made in accordance with published rules stating the time, place, fees (if any) and procedures to be followed.
  - o. **Processed Request or Processed Administrative Appeal** – a request or administrative appeal for which an agency has taken final action in all respects.
  - p. **Range in Number of Days** – the lowest and highest number of days to process requests or administrative appeals.
  - q. **Time Limits** – the time period in the statute for an agency to respond to a FOIA request (ordinarily twenty working days from receipt of a perfected FOIA request).
3. The following are concise descriptions of the nine FOIA exemptions:
- a. **Exemption 1:** classified national defense and foreign relations information
  - b. **Exemption 2:** internal agency rules and practices
  - c. **Exemption 3:** information that is prohibited from disclosure by another federal law
  - d. **Exemption 4:** trade secrets and other confidential business information
  - e. **Exemption 5:** inter-agency or intra-agency communications that are protected by legal privileges
  - f. **Exemption 6:** information involving matters of personal privacy
  - g. **Exemption 7:** records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, to the extent that the production of those records (A) could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings, (B) would deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, (C) could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, (D) could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source, (E) would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or (F) could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual
  - h. **Exemption 8:** information relating to the supervision of financial institutions

- i. **Exemption 9:** geological information on wells

**IV. EXEMPTION 3 STATUTES**

- A. Exemption 3 Statutes Relied upon to Withhold Information

Statute	Type of Information Withheld	Case Citation	Total Number of Times Relied upon by Agency
None	N/A	N/A	N/A

**V. FOIA REQUESTS**

- A. Received, Processed and Pending FOIA Requests

	Number of Requests Pending as of Start of Fiscal Year	Number of Requests Received in Fiscal Year	Number of Requests Processed in Fiscal Year	Number of Requests Pending as of End of Fiscal Year
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	1	44	42	3

- B.(1) Disposition of FOIA Requests -- All Processed Requests

	Number of Full Grants	Number of Partial Grants/Partial Denials	Number of Full Denials Based on Exemptions	Number of Full Denials Based on Reasons Other Than Exemptions (see + chart below)	Total
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	8	6	0	28	42

+ Full Denials -- Other Reasons	No Records	All Records Referred to Another Component or Agency	Request Withdrawn	Fee-Related Reason	Records not Reasonably Described	Improper FOIA Request for Other Reason	Not Agency Record	Duplicate Request	Other *Explain in Chart Below
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	24	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0

- B.(2) Disposition of FOIA Requests -- “Other” Reasons for “Full Denials Based on Reasons Other than Exemptions” from Section V.B.(1) Chart

	<b>* Description of "Other" Reasons for Denials from Chart B.(1) &amp; Number of Times Those Reasons Were Relied Upon</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	N/A	N/A

B.(3) Disposition of FOIA Requests -- Number of Times Exemptions Applied

	Ex. 1	Ex. 2	Ex. 3	Ex. 4	Ex. 5	Ex. 6	Ex. 7(A)	Ex. 7(B)	Ex. 7(C)	Ex. 7(D)	Ex. 7(E)	Ex. 7(F)	Ex. 8	Ex. 9
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**VI. ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS OF INITIAL DETERMINATIONS OF FOIA REQUESTS**

A. Received, Processed and Pending Administrative Appeals

<b>Number of Appeals Pending as of the Start of Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Numbers of Appeals Received in Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Appeals Processed in Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Appeals Pending as of End of Fiscal Year</b>
0	0	0	0

B. Disposition of Administrative Appeals -- All Processed Appeals

<b>Number Affirmed on Appeal</b>	<b>Number Partially Affirmed &amp; Partially Reversed/Remanded on Appeal</b>	<b>Number Completely Reversed/Remanded on Appeal</b>	<b>Number of Appeals Closed for Other Reasons</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
0	0	0	0	0

C.(1) Reasons for Denial on Appeal -- Number of Times Exemptions Applied

Ex. 1	Ex. 2	Ex. 3	Ex. 4	Ex. 5	Ex. 6	Ex. 7(A)	Ex. 7(B)	Ex. 7(C)	Ex. 7(D)	Ex. 7(E)	Ex. 7(F)	Ex. 8	Ex. 9
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.(2) Reasons for Denial on Appeal -- Reasons Other Than Exemptions

No Records	Records Referred at Initial Request Level	Request Withdrawn	Fee-Related Reason	Records not Reasonably Described	Improper Request for Other Reasons	Not Agency Record	Duplicate Request or Appeal	Request in Litigation	Appeal Based Solely on Denial of Request for Expedited Processing	Other *Explain in Chart Below
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

C.(3) Reasons for Denial on Appeal -- "Other" Reasons from Section VI.C.(2) Chart

* Description of "Other" Reasons for Denials from Chart C.(1) & Number of Times Those Reasons Were Relied Upon	TOTAL
N/A	N/A

C.(4) Response Time for Administrative Appeals

Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

C.(5) Ten Oldest Pending Administrative Appeals

	10 <sup>th</sup> Oldest Appeal	9 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Oldest Appeal
Date of Receipt of Ten Oldest Appeals	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Days Pending	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**VII. FOIA REQUESTS: RESPONSE TIME FOR PROCESSED AND PENDING REQUESTS**

A. Processed Requests -- Response Time for All Processed Perfected Requests

OGE OVERALL	SIMPLE				COMPLEX				EXPEDITED PROCESSING			
	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days
	12.5	11.0	1	30	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

B. Processed Requests -- Response Time for Perfected Requests in Which Information Was Granted

	SIMPLE				COMPLEX				EXPEDITED PROCESSING			
	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Lowest Number of Days	Highest Number of Days
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	14.0	10.0	1	30	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

C. Processed Requests -- Response Time in Day Increments

**Simple Requests**

	1-20 Days	21-40 Days	41-60 Days	61-80 Days	81-100 Days	101-120 Days	121-140 Days	141-160 Days	161-180 Days	181-200 Days	201-300 Days	301-400 Days	401+ Days	TOTAL
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	41	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42

**Complex Requests**

	1-20 Days	21-40 Days	41-60 Days	61-80 Days	81-100 Days	101-120 Days	121-140 Days	141-160 Days	161-180 Days	181-200 Days	201-300 Days	301-400 Days	401+ Days	TOTAL
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Requests Granted Expedited Processing**

	1-20 Days	21-40 Days	41-60 Days	61-80 Days	81-100 Days	101-120 Days	121-140 Days	141-160 Days	161-180 Days	181-200 Days	201-300 Days	301-400 Days	401+ Days	TOTAL
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

D. Pending Requests -- All Pending Perfected Requests

	SIMPLE			COMPLEX			EXPEDITED PROCESSING		
	Number Pending	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Number Pending	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Number Pending	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	3	6.0	5.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

E. Ten Oldest Pending Perfected Requests

<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> Oldest Request and Number of Days Pending</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Oldest Request and Number of Days Pending</b>
Rec'd Date:	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	09/24/08	09/22/08	09/22/08
Number of Days:	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	6	6

### VIII. REQUESTS FOR EXPEEDITED PROCESSING AND REQUESTS FOR FEE WAIVER

#### A. Requests for Expedited Processing

	<b>Number Granted</b>	<b>Number Denied</b>	<b>Median Number of Days to Adjudicate</b>	<b>Average Number of Days to Adjudicate</b>	<b>Number Adjudicated Within Ten Calendar Days</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

#### B. Requests for Fee Waiver

	<b>Number Granted</b>	<b>Number Denied</b>	<b>Median Number of Days to Adjudicate</b>	<b>Average Number of Days to Adjudicate</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

### IX. FOIA PERSONNEL AND COSTS

	<b>PERSONNEL</b>			<b>COSTS</b>		
	<b>Number of "Full-Time FOIA Employees"</b>	<b>Number of Equivalent "Full-Time FOIA Employees"</b>	<b>Total Number of "Full-Time FOIA Staff"</b>	<b>Processing Costs</b>	<b>Litigation-Related Costs</b>	<b>Total Costs</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	0	0.6	0.6	\$65,000	\$0	\$65,000

**X. FEES COLLECTED FOR PROCESSING REQUESTS**

	<b>Total Amount of Fees Collected</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Costs</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	\$0	0%

**XI. FOIA REGULATIONS**

OGE’s FOIA regulations, including the fee schedule, are codified at 5 C.F.R. part 2604 [LINK].

**XI. BACKLOGS, CONSULTATIONS, AND COMPARISONS**

A. Backlogs of FOIA Requests and Administrative Appeals

	<b>Number of Backlogged Requests as of End of Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Backlogged Appeals as of End of Fiscal Year</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	0	0

B. Consultations on FOIA Requests -- Received, Processed, and Pending Consultations

	<b>Number of Consultations Received from Other Agencies that Were <u>Pending</u> at OGE as of <u>Start</u> of the Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Consultations <u>Received</u> from Other Agencies During the Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Consultations Received from Other Agencies that Were <u>Processed</u> by OGE During the Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Consultations Received from Other Agencies that Were <u>Pending</u> at OGE as of <u>End</u> of the Fiscal Year</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	0	0	0	0

E. Consultations on FOIA Requests -- Ten Oldest Consultations Received from Other Agencies and Pending at OGE

<b>OGE Overall</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> Oldest Consultation and Number of Days Pending</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Oldest Consultation and Number of Days Pending</b>
Rec'd Date:	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Days:	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

D. Comparison of Numbers of Requests from Previous and Current Annual Report -- Requests Received, Processed, and Backlogged

	<b>NUMBER OF REQUESTS RECEIVED</b>		<b>NUMBER OF REQUESTS PROCESSED</b>	
	<b>Number Received During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report</b>	<b>Number Received During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report</b>	<b>Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report s</b>	<b>Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	40	44	40	42

	<b>Number of Backlogged Requests as of End of Fiscal Year from Previous Annual Report</b>	<b>Number of Backlogged Appeals as of End of Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	0	0

	<b>NUMBER OF APPEALS RECEIVED</b>		<b>NUMBER OF APPEALS PROCESSED</b>	
	<b>Number Received During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report</b>	<b>Number Received During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report</b>	<b>Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report s</b>	<b>Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	1	0	1	0

	<b>Number of Backlogged Appeals as of End of Fiscal Year from Previous Annual Report</b>	<b>Number of Backlogged Appeals as of End of Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report</b>
<b>OGE OVERALL</b>	0	0

F. Discussion of Other FOIA Activities (Optional)

OGE has continued to fully comply with the FOIA & implementing E.O./DOJ guidance.