



U.S. Department of
Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

March 3, 2020

FOIA Request No.: 19-03900-F

Hart Wood
American Oversight
1030 15th Street, NW
Suite B255
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Wood:

This letter the initial agency decision on your January 28, 2019 request, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), FOIA Service requesting the following information from December 21, 2018 to January 25, 2019:

1. All records reflecting costs reimbursed or paid directly by your agency for any reimbursable expenses attributable to any political appointee.
2. Payments or reimbursements include any payments associated with travel (including the travel of any staff or security detail assigned to a political appointee), long-term housing, the cost of government transportation, individual airfare for government employees and/or their spouses, lodging, meals, per diem payments, rental vehicles, overtime payments, payments made via government-issued charge cards or travel cards, or any other reimbursable expenses.

Your request was referred to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Central Office FOIA Office under FOIA Tracking number 19-03900-F and was received in my office on February 7, 2019.

A comprehensive search for documents responsive to your request by the Office of the VHA Chief of Staff (10B) has concluded. After conducting a reasonable search, we have concluded that the VHA Central Office, does not have records responsive to your request. Courts have determined the reasonableness of an agency's search can depend on whether the agency properly determined where responsive records were likely to be found, and searched those locations. [See Jacoe v. IRS, No. 98-C-0466, 1999 WL 675322, at *4 (E.D. Wis. July 23, 1999) (recognizing that agency "diligently searched for the records requested in those places where [agency] expected they could be located")]. Record search inquiries were made to the appropriate offices. The search was conducted of the Concur Government Edition (GCE) travel website by utilizing the search criteria of the political appointee's name for the date range of December 21, 2018 through January 25, 2019. At the conclusion of the search, a "no records" response was provided for responsive records to your request.

Please be advised that you may appeal the "no records" response to:

Office of the General Counsel (024)

Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420
Email: ogcfoiaappeals@va.gov

If you should choose to file an appeal, your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted no later than ninety (90) calendar days from the date of this letter. Please include a copy of this letter with your written appeal and clearly state why you disagree with the determinations set forth in this response.

You may also seek assistance and/or dispute resolution services for any other aspect of your FOIA request from VHA's FOIA Public Liaison and/or Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) as provided below:

VHA FOIA Public Liaison:
Email Address: vhafioa2@va.gov
Phone Number: (877) 461-5038

Office of Government Information Services (OGIS)
Email: ogis@nara.gov
Fax: (202) 741-5769
Mailing address: Office of Government Information Services
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001

Thank you for your interest in VA. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at (772) 562-5284.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Carol E. Farer".

Carol E. Farer, RHIA, CHPS, CIPP/.G, CHPC
VHA FOIA Office