



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Benefits Administration
Washington DC 20420



February 27, 2019

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

FOIA #: 19-03901-F

Dear Mr. Wood,

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, received in our office on February 7, 2019, in which you are seeking: All records reflecting costs reimbursed or paid directly by your agency for any reimbursable expenses attributable to any political appointee. 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. (Date Range for Record Search: 12/21/2018 To 1/25/2019)

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) conducted a reasonable search for the records you have requested. After conducting a reasonable search, we have concluded that VBA 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 office(s). The search was conducted by utilizing the search criteria of [December 2017 for emails]. At the conclusion of the search, a "no records" response was provided for responsive records to your request.

This concludes our response. Your request was processed by the undersigned. You may appeal the determination made in this response to:

General Counsel (024)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

If you should choose to make an appeal, your appeal must be postmarked no later than ninety (90) calendar days after the date of the adverse determination. It must clearly identify the determination being appealed and must include any assigned request number.

The appeal should include:

1. The name of the FOIA Officer
2. The address of the component
3. The date of the component's determination, if any
4. The precise subject matter of the appeal

If you choose to appeal only a portion of the determination, you must specify which part of the determination you are appealing. The appeal should include a copy of the request and VA's response, if any. The appeal should be marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal".

In addition to filing an appeal with the Office of General Counsel regarding my determination, you may also seek assistance and/or dispute resolution services regarding your FOIA request from VA's FOIA Public Liaison and or Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) as provided below:

VA FOIA Public Liaison:

Email Address: vacofoiaservice

Phone Number: (877) 750-3642

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 the Department of Veterans Affairs. Customer service is very important to us. If you have questions regarding this letter, please contact me on (202) 632-8928.

Sincerely yours,

Gwen Smith

Gwendolyn Smith
FOIA Officer