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or has his principal place of business, the judicial district in which the requested records are located, or the District of Columbia. If the denial of a request is reversed on appeal, the requester shall be so notified and the request shall be processed promptly in accordance with the decision on appeal.

§ 701.17 Preservation of records.

The Office shall preserve all correspondence relating to the requests it receives under this part, and all records processed pursuant to such requests, until such time as the destruction of such correspondence and records is authorized pursuant to title 44 of the United States Code. Under no circumstances shall records be destroyed while they are the subject of a pending request, appeal, or lawsuit under the FOIA.

§ 701.18 Fees.

(a) *In general.* Fees pursuant to the FOIA shall be assessed according to the schedule contained in paragraph (b) of this section for services rendered by the Office in responding to and processing requests for records under this part. All fees so assessed shall be charged to the requester, except when the charging of fees is limited under paragraph (c) of this section or when a waiver or reduction of fees is granted under paragraph (d) of this section. The Office shall collect all applicable fees before making copies of requested records available to a requester. Requesters shall pay fees by check or money order made payable to the Treasury of the United States.

(b) *Charges.* In responding to requests under this part, the following fees shall be assessed, unless a waiver or reduction of fees has been granted pursuant to paragraph (d) of this section:

(1) *Search.* (i) No search fee shall be assessed with respect to requests by educational institutions, noncommercial scientific institutions, and representatives of the news media (as defined in paragraphs (j)(6), (j)(7), and (j)(8) of this section, respectively). Search fees shall be assessed with respect to all other requests, subject to the limitations of paragraph (c) of this section. The Office may assess fees for time spent searching even if it fails to

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locate any respective record or when records located are subsequently determined to be entirely exempt from disclosure.

(ii) For each quarter hour spent by clerical personnel in searching for and retrieving a requested record, the fee shall be \$2.25. When the search and retrieval cannot be performed entirely by clerical personnel—for example, when the identification of records within the scope of the request requires the use of professional personnel—the fee shall be \$4.50 for each quarter hour of search time spent by such professional personnel. When the time of managerial personnel is required, the fee shall be \$7.50 for each quarter hour of time spent by such managerial personnel.

(iii) For computer searches of records, which may be undertaken through the use of existing programming, requesters shall be charged the actual direct costs of conducting the search, although certain requesters (as defined in paragraph (c)(2) of this section) shall be entitled to the cost equivalent of two hours of manual search time without charge. These direct costs shall include the cost of operating a central processing unit for that portion of operating time that is directly attributable to searching for records responsive to a request, as well as the costs of operator/programmer salary apportionable to the search (at no more than \$4.50 per quarter hour of time so spent). The Office is not required to alter or develop programming to conduct a search.

(2) *Duplication.* Duplication fees shall be assessed with respect to all requesters, subject to the limitations of paragraph (c) of this section. For a paper photocopy of a record (no more than one copy of which need be supplied), the fee shall be \$0.10 per page. For other methods of duplication, the Office shall charge the actual direct costs of duplicating a record.

(3) *Review.* Review fees shall be assessed with respect to only those requesters who seek records for a commercial use, as defined in paragraph (j)(5) of this section. For each quarter hour spent by agency personnel in reviewing a requested record for possible disclosure, the fee shall be \$4.50, except

that when the time of professional personnel is required, the fee shall be \$7.50 for each quarter hour of time spent by such managerial personnel. Review fees shall be assessed only for the initial record review, *i.e.*, all of the review undertaken when the Office analyzes the applicability of a particular exemption to a particular record or record portion at the initial request level. No charge shall be assessed for review at the administrative appeal level of an exemption already applied. However, records or record portions withheld pursuant to an exemption that is subsequently determined not to apply may be reviewed again to determine the applicability of other exemptions not previously considered. The costs of such a subsequent review are properly assessable, particularly when that review is made necessary by a change of circumstances.

(c) *Limitations on charging fees.* (1) No search or review fee shall be charged for a quarter-hour period unless more than half of that period is required for search or review.

(2) Except for requesters seeking records for a commercial use (as defined in paragraph (j)(5) of this section), the Office shall provide without charge

(i) The first 100 pages of duplication (or its cost equivalent), and

(ii) The first two hours of search (or its cost equivalent).

(3) Whenever a total fee calculated under this section is \$8.00 or less, no fee shall be charged.

(4) The provisions of paragraphs (c) (2) and (3) of this section work together. For requesters other than those seeking records for a commercial use, no fee shall be charged unless the cost of search in excess of two hours plus the cost of duplication in excess of 100 pages exceeds \$8.00.

(d) *Waiver or reduction of fees.* (1) Records responsive to a request under the FOIA shall be furnished without charge or at a charge reduced below that established under paragraph (b) of this section when the Officer determines, based upon information provided by a requester in support of a fee waiver request or otherwise made known to the Office, that disclosure of the requested information is in the

public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester. Requests for a waiver or reduction of fees shall be considered on a case-by-case basis.

(2) In order to determine whether the first fee waiver requirement is met—*i.e.*, that disclosure of the requested information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of government—the Office shall consider the following four factors in sequence:

(i) *The subject of the request: Whether the subject of the requested records concerns “the operations or activities of the government.”* The subject matter of the requested records, in the context of the request, must specifically concern the identifiable operations of the federal government—with a connection that is direct and clear, not remote or attenuated. Furthermore, the records must be sought for their informative value with respect to those government operations or activities; a request for access to records for their intrinsic informational content alone would not satisfy this threshold consideration.

(ii) *The informative value of the information to be disclosed: Whether the disclosure is “likely to contribute” to an understanding of government operations or activities.* The disclosable portions of requested records must be meaningfully informative or specific governmental operations or activities in order to hold potential for contributing to increased public understanding of those operations and activities. The disclosure of information that already is in the public domain, in either a duplicative or a substantially identical form, would not be likely to contribute to such understanding, as nothing new would be added to the public record.

(iii) *The contribution to an understanding of the subject by the public likely to result from disclosure: Whether disclosure of the requested information will contribute to “public understanding.”* The disclosure must contribute to the understanding of the public at large, as opposed to the individual understanding of the requester or a narrow

segment of identified persons. A requester's identity and qualifications—*e.g.*, expertise in the subject area and ability and intention to convey effectively information to the general public—should be considered. It reasonably may be presumed that a representative of the news media (as defined in paragraph (j)(8) of this section) who has access to the means of public dissemination readily will be able to satisfy this consideration. Requests from libraries or other record repositories (or requesters who intend merely to disseminate information to such institutions) shall be analyzed, like those of other requesters, to identify a particular person who represents that he actually will use the requested information in scholarly or other analytic work and then disseminate it to the general public.

(iv) *The significance of the contribution to public understanding: Whether the disclosure is likely to contribute "significantly" to public understanding of government operations or activities.* The public's understanding of the subject matter in question, as compared to the level of public understanding existing prior to the disclosure, must be likely to be enhanced by the disclosure to a significant extent. The Office shall not make separate value judgments as to whether information, even though it in fact would contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government, is "important" enough to be made public.

(3) In order to determine whether the second fee waiver requirement is met—*i.e.*, that disclosure of the requested information is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester—the Office shall consider the following two factors in sequence:

(i) *The existence and magnitude of a commercial interest: Whether the requester has a commercial interest that would be furthered by the requested disclosure.* The Office shall consider all commercial interests of the requester (with reference to the definition of "commercial use" in paragraph (j)(5) of this section), or any person on whose behalf the requester may be acting, but shall consider only those interests that would be furthered by the requested disclosure. In assessing the magnitude

of identified commercial interests, consideration shall be given the role that such FOIA-disclosed information plays with respect to those commercial interests, as well as to the extent to which FOIA disclosures serve those interests overall. Requesters shall be given a reasonable opportunity in the administrative process to provide information bearing upon this consideration.

(ii) *The primary interest in disclosure: Whether the magnitude of the identified commercial interest of the requester is sufficiently large, in comparison with the public interest in disclosure, that disclosure is "primarily in the commercial interest of the requester."* A fee waiver or reduction is warranted only when, once the "public interest" standard set out in paragraph (d)(2) of this section is satisfied, that public interest can fairly be regarded as greater in magnitude than that of the requester's commercial interest in disclosure. The Office shall ordinarily presume that, where a news media requester has satisfied the "public interest" standard, that will be the interest primarily served by disclosure to that requester. Disclosure to data brokers or others who compile and market governmental information for direct economic return shall not be presumed to serve primarily the "public interest."

(4) When only a portion of the requested records satisfies both of the requirements for a waiver or reduction of fees under this paragraph, a waiver or reduction shall be granted only as to that portion.

(5) Requests for the waiver or reduction of fees shall address each of the factors listed in paragraphs (d) (2) and (3) of this section, as they apply to each record request.

(e) *Notice of anticipated fees in excess of \$25.00.* When the Office determines or estimates that the fees to be assessed under this section may amount to more than \$25.00, the Office shall notify the requester as soon as practicable of the actual or estimated amount of the fees, unless the requester has indicated in advance his willingness to pay fees as high as those anticipated. (If only a portion of the fee can be estimated readily, the Office shall advise the requester that the estimated fee may be

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only a portion of the total fee.) In cases when a requester has been notified that actual or estimated fees may amount to more than \$25.00, the request will be deemed not to have been received until the requester has agreed to pay the anticipated total fee. A notice to the requester pursuant to this paragraph shall offer him the opportunity to confer with Office personnel in order to reformulate his request to meet his needs at a lower cost.

(f) *Aggregating requests.* When the Office reasonably believes that a requester or a group of requesters acting in concert is attempting to divide a request into a series of requests for the purpose of evading the assessment of fees, the Office may aggregate any such requests and charge accordingly. The Office may presume that multiple requests of this type made within a 30-day period have been made in order to evade fees. When requests are separated by a longer period, the Office shall aggregate them only when there exists a solid basis for determining that such aggregation is warranted, *e.g.*, when the requests involve clearly related matters. Multiple requests involving unrelated matters shall not be aggregated.

(g) *Advance payments.* (1) When the Office estimates that a total fee to be assessed under this section is likely to exceed \$250.00, it may require the requester to make an advance payment of an amount up to the entire estimated fee before beginning to process the request, except when it receives a satisfactory assurance of full payment from a requester with a history of prompt payment or where a fee waiver, or reduction of fees, has been requested. In the case where a fee waiver or reduction of fees has been requested, the requester shall submit the advance payment, if required by the agency. This prepayment will not affect the Office's responsibility for speedy determination of the fee waiver, or reduction of fees, nor be deemed in derogation of the request for the fee waiver or reduction of fees. If the agency approves the fee waiver, or reduction of fees, the appropriate sum will be reimbursed to the requester, with no accumulated interest, if any.

(2) When a requester has previously failed to pay a records access fee within 30 days of the date of billing, the Office may require the requester to pay the full amount owed, plus any applicable interest (as provided for in paragraph (h) of this section), and to make an advance payment of the full amount of may estimated fee before the Office begins to process a new request or continues to process a pending request from that requester.

(3) For requests other than those described in paragraphs (g) (1) and (2) of this section, the Office shall not require the requester to make an advance payment, *i.e.*, a payment made before work is commenced or continued on a request. Payment owed for work already completed is not an advance payment.

(4) When a component acts under paragraphs (g) (1) or (2) of this section, the administrative time limits prescribed in subsection (a)(6) of the FOIA for the processing of an initial request or an appeal, plus permissible extensions of these time limits, shall be deemed not to begin to run until the Office has received payment of the assessed fee.

(h) *Charging interest.* The Office may assess interest charges on an unpaid bill starting on the 31st day following the day on which the bill was sent to the requester. Once a fee payment has been received by the Office, even if not processed, the accrual of interest shall be stayed. Interest charges shall be assessed at the rate prescribed in section 3717 of title 31 U.S.C. and shall accrue from the date of the billing. The Office shall follow the provisions of the Debt Collection Act of 1982, Public Law 97-265 (Oct. 25, 1982), 96 Stat. 1749, and its implementing procedures, including the use of consumer reporting agencies, collection agencies, and offset.

(i) *Other statutes specifically providing for fees.* (1) The fee schedule of this section does not apply with respect to the charging of fees under a statute specifically providing for setting the level of fees for particular types of records—*i.e.*, any statute that specifically requires a government printing entity such as the Government Printing Office or the National Technical Information Service to set and collect fees for

particular types of records—in order to:

(i) Serve both the general public and private sector organizations by conveniently making available government information;

(ii) Ensure that groups and individuals pay the cost of publications and other services that are for their special use so that these costs are not borne by the general taxpaying public;

(iii) Operate an information-dissemination activity on a self-sustaining basis to the extent possible; or

(iv) Return revenue to the Treasury for defraying, wholly or in part, appropriated funds used to pay the cost of disseminating government information.

(2) When records responsive to requests are maintained for distribution by agencies operating statutorily based fee schedule programs, the Office shall inform requesters of the steps necessary to obtain records from those sources.

(j) *Definitions.* For the purpose of this section:

(1) The term *direct costs* means those expenditures that the Office actually incurs in searching for and duplicating (and, in the case of commercial use requesters, reviewing) records to respond to a FOIA request. Direct costs include, for example, the salary of the employee performing the work (the basic rate of pay for the employee plus 16 percent of that rate to cover benefits) and the cost of operating duplicating machinery. Not included in direct costs are overhead expenses such as costs of space and heating or lighting of the facility in which the records are stored.

(2) The term *search* includes all time spent looking for material that is responsive to a request, including page-by-page or line-by-line identification of material within documents. The Office shall ensure, however, that searches are undertaken in the most efficient and least expensive manner reasonably possible; thus, for example, the Office shall not engage in line-by-line search when merely duplicating an entire document would be quicker and less expensive.

(3) The term *duplication* refers to the process of making a copy of a record

necessary to respond to a FOIA request. Such copies can take the form of paper copy, microfilm, audio-visual materials, or machine-readable documentation (e.g., magnetic tape or disk), among others. The copy provided shall be in a form that is reasonably usable by requesters.

(4) The term *review* refers to the process of examining a record located in response to a request in order to determine whether any portion of it is permitted to be withheld. It also includes processing any record for disclosure, e.g., doing all that is necessary to excise it and otherwise prepare it for release, although review costs shall be recoverable even where there ultimately is no disclosure of a record. Review time does not include time spent resolving general legal or policy issues regarding the application of exemptions.

(5) The term *commercial use* in the context of a request refers to a request from or on behalf of one who seeks information for a use or purpose that furthers the commercial, trade, or profit interests of the requester or the person on whose behalf the request is made, which can include furthering those interests through litigation. The Office shall determine, as well as reasonably possible, the use to which a requester will put the records requested. When the circumstances of a request suggest that the requester will put the records sought to a commercial use, either because of the nature of the request itself or because the Office otherwise has reasonable cause to doubt a requester's stated use, the Office shall provide the requester a reasonable opportunity to submit further clarification.

(6) The term *educational institution* refers to a preschool, a public or private elementary or secondary school, an institution of graduate higher education, and institution of professional education, and an institution of vocational education, which operates a program or programs of scholarly research. To be eligible for inclusion in this category, a requester must show that the request is being made as authorized by and under the auspices of a qualifying institution and that the records are not sought for a commercial use, but are

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sought in furtherance of scholarly research.

(7) The term *noncommercial scientific institution* refers to an institution that is not operated on a “commercial” basis as that term is referenced in paragraph (j)(5) of this section, and which is operated solely for the purpose of conducting scientific research, the results of which are not intended to promote any particular product or industry. To be eligible for inclusion in this category, a requester must show that the request is being made as authorized by and under the auspices of a qualifying institution and that the records are not sought for a commercial use, but are sought in furtherance of scientific research.

(8) The term *representative of the news media* refers to any person actively gathering news for an entity that is organized and operated to publish or broadcast news to the public. The term *news* means information that is about current events or that would be of current interest to the public. Examples of news media entities include television or radio stations broadcasting to the public at large, and publishers of periodicals (but only in those instances when they can qualify as disseminators of “news”) who make their products available for purchase or subscription by the general public. For “freelance”

journalists to be regarded as working for a news organization, they must demonstrate a solid basis for expecting publication through that organization; a publication contract would be the clearest proof, but the Office shall also look to the past publication record of a requester in making this determination. To be eligible for inclusion in this category, a requester also must not be seeking the requested records for a commercial use. In this regard, a request for records supporting the news dissemination function of the requester shall not be considered to be for a commercial use.

(k) *Charges for other services and materials.* Apart from the other provisions of this section, when the Office elects, as a matter of administrative discretion, to comply with a request for a special service or materials, such as certifying that records are true copies or sending them other than by ordinary mail, the actual direct costs of providing the service or materials shall be charged.

§ 701.19 Other rights and services.

Nothing in this part shall be construed to entitle any person, as of right, to any service or to the disclosure of any record to which such person is not entitled under 5 U.S.C. 552.