

responses and disseminates its findings and the requested records to the American public to inform them about “what their government is up to.”

4. Defendant U.S. Department of Justice (“DOJ”) is an agency of the United States Government. Defendant has possession, custody, and control of records to which Plaintiff seeks access. Defendant is headquartered at 950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20530.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

5. On August 17, 2017, Plaintiff submitted a FOIA request to the DOJ seeking the following:

All emails discussing or addressing potential abuses of Civil Asset Forfeiture by federal, state, or local law enforcement officials necessitating the safeguards adopted in Policy Directive 17-1.

All emails discussing potential additional safeguards considered but not adopted in Policy Directive 17-1, including limits on the use of Deferred Prosecution Agreements in conjunction with Civil Asset Forfeiture.

The time frame of the request was identified as January 21, 2017 through August 16, 2017.

6. On August 21, 2017, DOJ confirmed in writing that Plaintiff’s request had been referred to the DOJ components most likely to have responsive records and designated with FOIA Control Number CRM-300617469.

7. As of the filing of this Complaint, Defendant has failed to: (i) produce the requested records or demonstrate that the requested records are lawfully exempt from production; (ii) notify Plaintiff of the scope of any responsive records Defendant intends to produce or withhold and the reasons for any withholdings; or (iii) inform Plaintiff that it may appeal any adequately specific, adverse determination.

COUNT I

Violation of FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552

8. Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1 through 8 as if fully stated herein.

9. Plaintiff is being irreparably harmed by reason of Defendant's violation of FOIA, and Plaintiff will continue to be irreparably harmed unless Defendant is compelled to comply with FOIA.

10. To trigger FOIA's administrative exhaustion requirement, Defendant was required to determine whether to comply with Plaintiff's requests within thirty (30) business days of receipt. Accordingly, Defendants' determinations were due by about October 2, 2017, at the latest. At a minimum, Defendant was required to: (i) gather and review the requested documents; (ii) determine and communicate to Plaintiff the scope of any responsive records Defendant intended to produce or withhold and the reasons for any withholdings; (iii) inform Plaintiff that it may appeal any adequately specific, adverse determination; and (iv) make the records available promptly thereafter. *See, e.g., Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington v. Federal Election Commission*, 711 F.3d 180, 188-89 (D.C. Cir. 2013).

11. Because Defendant failed to make a substantive, appealable determination of whether to comply with Plaintiff's request within the time period required by FOIA for all components, Plaintiff is deemed to have exhausted its administrative remedies. 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(C)(i).

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court: (1) order Defendant to conduct searches for any and all records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request and demonstrate that it employed search methods reasonably likely to lead to the discovery of records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request; (2) order Defendant to produce, by a date certain, any and all non-

exempt records to Plaintiff's FOIA request and a Vaughn index of any responsive records withheld under claim of exemption; (3) enjoin Defendant from continuing to withhold any and all non-exempt records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request; (4) grant Plaintiff an award of attorneys' fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred in this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(E); and (5) grant Plaintiff such other relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: October 12, 2017

Respectfully submitted,

s/ Chris Fedeli

Chris Fedeli

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