

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.,	)	
425 Third Street SW, Suite 800	)	
Washington, DC 20024,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
v.	)	Civil Action No.
	)	
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF	)	
HOMELAND SECURITY,	)	
Office of the General Counsel	)	
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE	)	
Mail Stop 0485	)	
Washington, DC 20528,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	
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**COMPLAINT**

Plaintiff Judicial Watch, Inc. brings this action against Defendant U.S. Department of Homeland Security to compel compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552 (“FOIA”). As grounds therefor, Plaintiff alleges as follows:

**JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

1. The Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(B) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.
2. Venue is proper in this district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(e).

**PARTIES**

3. Plaintiff Judicial Watch, Inc. is a not-for-profit, educational organization incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia and headquartered at 425 Third Street SW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20024. Plaintiff seeks to promote transparency, integrity, and accountability in government and fidelity to the rule of law. As part of its mission, Plaintiff regularly requests records from federal agencies pursuant to FOIA. Plaintiff analyzes the

agencies' responses and disseminates both 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 Homeland Security is an agency of the U.S. Government and is headquartered at 2707 Martin Luther King Jr Ave SE, Washington, DC 20528. Defendant has possession, custody, and control of records to which Plaintiff seeks access.

### **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

5. By a letter dated May 2, 2023, Plaintiff served a FOIA request on the U.S. Secret Service ("Secret Service"), a component of Defendant U.S. Department of Homeland Security, seeking certain records relating to the White House press secretary. Specifically, the request seeks:

**All reports, memoranda, and internal USSS electronic communications, including emails and text messages, regarding the provision or potential provision of USSS protection to Navy Joan Roberts, the daughter of Hunter Biden and granddaughter of President Joe Biden.**

The time frame for the requested records was identified as June 1, 2018 to the present.

6. By a letter dated May 4, 2023, the Secret Service acknowledged receipt of Plaintiff's request and stated that the request had been assigned FOIA File No. 20230571.

7. On June 12, 2023, the Secret Service issued a final response to Plaintiff's request, stating that no responsive records had been located.

8. Plaintiff timely appealed the Secret Service's determination by a letter dated June 12, 2023, challenging the thoroughness of the Secret Service's search for records.

9. As of the date of this Complaint, the Secret Service has failed to respond to Plaintiff's appeal, or otherwise demonstrated that it has conducted an adequate search or produced the requested records.

**COUNT I**  
**(Violation of FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552)**

10. Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1 through 9 as if fully stated herein.

11. Defendant is in violation of FOIA.

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

13. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law.

14. To trigger FOIA's administrative exhaustion requirement, Defendant was required to respond to Plaintiff's appeal by July 13, 2023.

15. Because Defendant failed to respond to Plaintiff's appeal within the time limit set by FOIA, Plaintiff is deemed to have exhausted its administrative appeal remedies.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests that the Court: (1) order Defendant to search for any and all records responsive to Plaintiff's FOIA request and demonstrate that it employed search methods reasonably calculated to uncover all records responsive to the request; (2) order Defendant to produce, by a date certain, any and all non-exempt records responsive 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: July 14, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ James F. Peterson

James F. Peterson

D.C. Bar No. 450171

JUDICIAL WATCH, INC.

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