

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. )  
 )  
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF )  
 HOMELAND SECURITY, )  
 Office of the General Counsel )  
 245 Murray Lane, SW )  
 Mailstop 0485 )  
 Washington, DC 20528-0485, )  
 )  
 Defendant. )

Civil Action No.

**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 245 Murray Lane SW, Mailstop 0485, Washington, DC 20528. Defendant has possession, custody, and control of records to which Plaintiff seeks access.

### STATEMENT OF FACTS

5. On August 12, 2024, Plaintiff served a FOIA request by email on the U.S. Secret Service ("Secret Service"), a component of Defendant U.S. Department of Homeland Security, seeking certain records relating to a reported incident involving the Secret Service and unauthorized entry on private property. Specifically, the request seeks:

**1, Any and all emails and text messages sent to and from members of the Vice Presidential Protective Detail regarding the break-in by Secret Service officials of the Four One Three Salon in Pittsfield, Massachusetts on July 27, 2024, as described in various news media, such as <https://nypost.com/2024/08/11/us-news/secret-service-apologizes-to-salon-owner-over-break-in-bathroom-use-during-kamala-harris-event/>.**

**2. Any and all emails and text messages sent to and from the Special Agent-in-Charge of the Secret Service field office in Boston, as well as Acting USSS Director Ronald Rowe, Assistant Director Michael Plati, Assistant Director Brian Lambert, and Assistant Director David Smith regarding the break-in of the Four One Three Salon.**

**3. Copies of any and all complaints filed against the Secret Service by individuals or businesses impacted by Secret Service operations in connection with the July 27 Harris campaign fundraiser in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.**

The timeframe for the request was identified as July 25, 2024, to the present.

6. By a letter dated August 12, 2024, the Secret Service acknowledged receipt of Plaintiff's request and stated that the request had been assigned FOIA File No. 20241287. The letter stated that the Secret Service was invoking a 10-day extension to respond to the request.

7. As of the date of this Complaint, the Secret Service has failed to produce the requested records or otherwise demonstrate that the requested records are exempt from production.

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

8. Plaintiff realleges paragraphs 1 through 7 as if fully stated herein.

9. Defendant is in violation of FOIA.

10. 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.

11. Plaintiff has no adequate remedy at law.

12. To trigger FOIA's administrative exhaustion requirement, Defendant was required to make a final determination on Plaintiff's request and administrative appeal by September 24, 2024, at the latest.

13. Because Defendant failed to make a final determination on Plaintiff's request within the time limits 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: September 26, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

*/s/ James F. Peterson* \_\_\_\_\_

James F. Peterson

D.C. Bar No. 450171

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