

# EXHIBIT A



July 22, 2019

**VIA Electronic Delivery**

U.S. Department of State  
Office of Information Programs and Services  
A/GIS/IPS/RL  
Building SA-2, Suite 8100  
515 22nd Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20522-0208  
Fax No.: (202) 261-8579  
[FOIArequest@state.gov](mailto:FOIArequest@state.gov)

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Records Request**

Dear FOIA Officer:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. §§ 552 *et seq.*, and the U.S. Department of State (“State”) FOIA regulations beginning at 22 C.F.R. Part 171, the Democracy Forward Foundation submits this request.

**I. Background**

On May 30, 2019, State published a notice in the Federal Register announcing “an intent to establish the Department of State Commission on Unalienable Rights ... in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act” (the “Commission”).<sup>1</sup> The Commission is to “provide the Secretary of State advice and recommendations concerning international human rights matters” and “fresh thinking about human rights discourse where such discourse has departed from our nation’s founding principles of natural law and natural rights.”<sup>2</sup> At a press conference held on July 8, 2019, Secretary Pompeo announced a roster of twelve Commission members: Mary-Anne Glendon; Russell Berman; Peter Berkowitz; Paolo Carozza; Hamza Yusuf Hanson; Jacqueline Rivers; Meir Soloveichik; Katrina Lantos Swett; Christopher Tollefsen; and David Tse-Chien Pan.<sup>3</sup> Two current State Department employees were also named: Kiron Skinner, Head of the

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<sup>1</sup> See U.S. Dep’t of State, *Department of State Commission on Unalienable Rights*, 84 Fed. Reg. 25109, 25109 (May 30, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> The Charter allows for up to fifteen (15) members, so the list of commissioners could potentially expand further.

Executive Secretary of the Committee, and Cartright Weiland, Rapporteur.<sup>4</sup> A number of these Commission members are known to oppose equal rights for LGBTQI individuals, access to legal abortion, or both.

Following the announcement that the Department intended to create the Commission, commenters immediately raised alarms that

the Commission will advance a specific brand of conservative arguments aimed at: (a) dialing back gains on LGBTQI rights and women's rights, including particularly the right to choose and the right to marriage equality; (b) de-prioritizing fundamental economic, social and cultural rights; and (c) supporting longstanding U.S. hypocrisy on human rights, namely, using rights to attack opponents while (re)interpreting rights to avoid criticism of the U.S. record at home and abroad.<sup>5</sup>

## II. Records Requested

In an effort to understand, and explain to the public, the context surrounding the State Department's creation of a Commission on Unalienable Rights, Democracy Forward Foundation requests that State produce the following within twenty (20) business days:

1. Any and all records discussing the creation, operation, or public messaging surrounding the Department of State Commission on Unalienable Rights.
2. All calendar entries, phone logs, visitor logs, emails or other records reflecting communications or meetings between State Department officials and any of the following individuals:
  - Mary-Anne Glendon;
  - Russell Berman;
  - Peter Berkowitz;
  - Paolo Carozza;
  - Hamza Yusuf Hanson;
  - Jacqueline Rivers;
  - Meir Soloveichik;
  - Katrina Lantos Swett;
  - Christopher Tollefsen;
  - David Tse-Chien Pan;
  - Robert P. George;<sup>6</sup> and

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<sup>4</sup> Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo Remarks to the Press, Washington, D.C., July 8, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-of-state-michael-r-pompeo-remarks-to-the-press-3/>.

<sup>5</sup> Jayne Huckerby et al., *Trump's "Unalienable Rights" Commission Likely to Promote Anti-Rights Agenda*, JustSecurity (July 9, 2019), <https://www.justsecurity.org/64859/trumps-unalienable-rights-commission-likely-to-promote-anti-rights-agenda/>.

<sup>6</sup> Mr. George is the McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University. He was not announced as a Commission member, but reporting indicates that his thinking and writing have been influential to the Department

- William Saunders.<sup>7</sup>
3. All calendar entries, phone logs, visitor logs, emails or other records reflecting communications or meetings between State Department officials and individuals representing or affiliated with the Becket Fund, the Alliance Defending Freedom, Focus on the Family, the Heritage Foundation, the Federalist Society, the National Organization for Marriage, the Family Research Council, and Americans United for Life.
  4. Any and all records discussing “unalienable rights,” “natural rights,” or “natural law.”

Please search for records created between January 1, 2019 and the date on which the search is completed with the following individuals and offices: Kiron Skinner; Cartright Weiland; Office of the Secretary of State; Office of the Chief of Staff; Office of the Counselor of the Department; Office of the Policy Planning Staff; Office of the Legal Adviser; Office of the Deputy Secretary of State; the Office of Public Affairs; the Office of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL); and any other office or custodian reasonably likely to have responsive records.

Please search for records regardless of format, including paper records, electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, data, and graphical materials. This request includes, without limitation, all correspondence, letters, emails, text messages, calendar entries, facsimiles, telephone messages, voice mail messages, and transcripts, notes, minutes, or audio or video recordings of any meetings, telephone conversations, or discussions. In searching for responsive records, however, please exclude publicly available materials such as news clips that mention otherwise responsive search terms.

FOIA requires agencies to disclose information, with only limited exceptions for information that would harm an interest protected by a specific exemption or where disclosure is prohibited by law. 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(8)(A). In the event that any of the requested documents cannot be disclosed in their entirety, we request that you release any material that can be reasonably segregated. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(b). Should any documents or portions of documents be withheld, we further request that you state with specificity the description of the document to be withheld and the legal and factual grounds for withholding any documents or portions thereof in an index, as required by *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973). Should any document include both disclosable and non-disclosable material that cannot reasonably be segregated, we request that you describe what proportion of the information in a document is non-disclosable and how that information is dispersed throughout the document. *Mead Data Cent., Inc. v. U.S. Dep’t of Air Force*, 566 F.2d 242, 261 (D.C. Cir. 1977).

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on this topic. *See, e.g.,* Conor Finnegan, *State Dept. Panel to Redefine Human Rights Based on ‘Natural Law and Natural Rights’*, ABC News (May 31, 2019), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/state-dept-panel-redefine-human-rights-based-natural/story?id=63400485>.

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Saunders is the Chair of the Religious Liberties Practice Group of the Federalist Society, and a co-director of the Center for Religious Liberty at the Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law. He has not publicly been named to the Commission.

If requested records are located in, or originated in, another agency, department, office, installation or bureau, please refer this request or any relevant portion of this request to the appropriate entity.

To the extent that the records are readily reproducible in an electronic format, we would prefer to receive the records in that format. However, if certain records are not available in that format, we are willing to accept the best available copy of each such record.

Please respond to this request in writing within 20 working days as required under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(6)(A)(i). If all of the requested documents are not available within that time period, we request that you provide us with all requested documents or portions of documents that are available within that time period. If all relevant records are not produced within that time period, we are entitled to a waiver of fees for searching and duplicating records under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(viii)(I).

### **III. Request for Fee Waiver**

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) and 22 C.F.R. Part 171, Democracy Forward Foundation requests a waiver of all fees associated with processing records for this request. FOIA requires documents to be furnished to requesters at no fee or reduced fees when “if disclosure of the 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.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A).

*The disclosure of records sought by this Request is likely to contribute significantly to the public understanding of the operations or activities of the government.*

As described above, the State Department’s creation of a Commission on Unalienable Rights, is an issue of significant and ongoing public attention, and the records requested will contribute to the public’s understanding of the operation and activities of the government. In particular, these records could help to inform the public about the basis for the creation of such a commission, the reasons for the selection of the Commission members, and the process by which they were selected.

*Democracy Forward Foundation is able to, and regularly does, disseminate Records obtained through FOIA requests to a broad audience of persons interested in the subject matter.*

In determining whether a fee waiver is appropriate, courts consider whether a requester has a “demonstrated . . . ability to disseminate the requested information,” *Cause of Action v. F.T.C.*, 799 F.3d 1108, 1116-17 (D.C. Cir. 2015), and whether the requester regularly disseminates records obtained through FOIA to “a reasonably broad audience of persons interested in the subject” of its work. *Carney v. U.S. Dep’t of Justice*, 19 F.3d 807, 814-15 (2d Cir. 1994). FOIA does not require a requester to describe exactly how it intends to disseminate the information requested, as that would require “pointless specificity”; all that is necessary is for a requester to adequately demonstrate its “ability to publicize disclosed information.” *Judicial Watch, Inc. v.*

*Rossotti*, 326 F.3d 1309, 1314 (D.C. Cir. 2003). In evaluating a fee waiver request, courts consider how a requester actually communicates information collected through FOIA to the public, including press releases or a website where documents received are made available, see *id.*, or whether the requester has a history of “contacts with any major news[] companies” that suggest an ability to disseminate materials of interest through the press. *Larson v. C.I.A.*, 843 F.2d 1481, 1483 (D.C. Cir. 1988) (upholding a denial of a fee waiver to a requester who had failed to identify his relationships with newspaper companies that could disseminate documents). DFF has a demonstrated ability to disseminate information of public interest requested through FOIA, and intends to publicize records DFF receives that contribute significantly to the public’s understanding of the Department’s interest in studying unalienable rights, and the context surrounding its decision to form the Commission to help advise it on that topic.

DFF operates a dedicated communications staff with deep relations with a wide variety of national publications. When DFF obtains materials through FOIA requests that are of significant public interest, DFF’s communications staff regularly works to ensure that these materials and their contents are featured in press articles educating the public about the operation of government; many articles feature additional commentary and analysis from DFF staff about those materials and their relevance to policy issues of public interest.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Alexander Nazaryan, *Why did right-wing troll Charles C. Johnson meet with Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross?*, Yahoo News (May 14, 2019), <https://news.yahoo.com/why-did-rightwing-troll-charles-c-johnson-want-to-meet-with-commerce-secretary-wilbur-ross-090000636.html>; Derek Kravitz and Jack Gillum, “Happy to Do It”: Emails Show Current FAA Chief Coordinated With Ex-Lobbyist Colleagues on Policy, ProPublica (Mar. 27, 2019), <https://www.propublica.org/article/dan-elwell-current-faa-chief-coordinated-with-ex-lobbyist-colleagues-on-policy>; Hamid Aleaziz, *Emails Show US Border Officials Didn’t Receive “Zero Tolerance” Guidance Until After the Policy Was Enacted*, BuzzFeed News (Feb. 28, 2019), <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/hamedaleaziz/zero-tolerance-policy-guidance-dhs-family-separation>; Jonathan Cohn and Jeffrey Young, *Emails Show Trump Administration Was Told Obamacare Ad Cuts Could Hurt Enrollment*, Huffpost (Dec. 17, 2018), [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-verma-obamacare-advertising-cut\\_us\\_5c115061e4b084b082ff8dba](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-verma-obamacare-advertising-cut_us_5c115061e4b084b082ff8dba); Madison Pauly, *When the Biggest Prison Company Complained About a California Sanctuary Law, ICE Listened*, Mother Jones (Dec. 7, 2018), <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2018/12/geo-memo-private-prison-california-immigration/>; Eliza Rellman, “Just answer the question and kill this story”: In internal emails, Heather Nauert criticized Rex Tillerson’s refusal to deny reports that he called Trump a ‘moron,’ Business Insider (Nov. 2, 2018), <https://www.businessinsider.com/heather-nauert-rex-tillerson-trump-moron-2018-11>; Rebecca Klein, *Lawsuit Accuses Betsy DeVos And Her Deputies Of Being Motivated By Sexism*, HuffPost (Oct. 31, 2018), [https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/us\\_5bd9ff6ee4b01abe6a1ad4a9](https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/us_5bd9ff6ee4b01abe6a1ad4a9); Nick Penzenstadler, *A year after Vegas shooting, ATF emails reveal blame, alarm over bump stocks*, USA Today (Oct. 1, 2018), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/10/01/year-after-vegas-shooting-atf-emails-reveal-blame-alarm-over-bump-stocks/1432137002/>; Jessica Kwong, *Ivanka Trump was more than complicit in Obama equal pay rollback—she had a hand in it, watchdog alleges*, Newsweek (Aug. 29, 2018), <https://www.newsweek.com/ivanka-trump-equal-pay-complicit-obama-1093833>; Vera Bergengruen, *New Emails Show What Happens When The Pentagon Has To Scramble To Catch Up To Trump*, BuzzFeed News (July 25, 2018), <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/verabergengruen/these-emails-show-what-happens-when-the-white-house-keeps>; Erin Dooley, *Exclusive: Former for-profit college executive shaped Education Department policy that could benefit former employers: Documents*, ABC News (May 15, 2017), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/exclusive-profit-college-executive-shaped-education-department-policy/story?id=55108981>; Heidi Przybyla, *Notes, emails reveal Trump appointees’ war to end HHS teen pregnancy program*, NBC News (Mar. 20, 2018), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/notes-emails-reveal-trump-appointees-war-end-hhs-teen-pregnancy-n857686>; Dominic Holden, *Documents Show The Trump Administration Approved Bump Stocks Before It Opposed Them*, BuzzFeed News (Mar. 22, 2018), <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/dominicholden/trump-administration-bump-stocks>; Bernard Condon, *Trump Advisor Denies He Cheered End of Tunnel Funding Deal*,

Additionally, DFF regularly sends press releases and other materials to over 6,000 members of the press and the over 7,000 members on our organization's email list, discussing ongoing legal developments related to executive branch policymaking. These materials often include descriptions and analysis of information obtained by DFF through its FOIA requests.<sup>9</sup> In addition, DFF operates a verified Twitter account with over 6,000 followers, and frequently uses the account to circulate significant documents received through FOIA requests.<sup>10</sup>

DFF's website also houses a great deal of information obtained through its FOIA requests, accessible to the public at no cost. DFF's website logged over 187,000 pageviews in 2018 alone. Finally, DFF frequently incorporates documents received through FOIA into related legal actions brought by DFF on behalf of its clients, and in doing so further publicizes documents received by explaining their legal significance.<sup>11</sup>

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Associated Press (Feb. 13, 2018), available at <https://www.usnews.com/news/business/articles/2018-02-13/trump-adviser-denies-he-cheered-end-of-tunnel-funding-deal>; Celeste Katz, *Interior Department tapped wildfire preparedness funds for Ryan Zinke helicopter tour*, Newsweek (Dec. 29, 2017), <https://www.newsweek.com/ryan-zinke-interior-department-helicopters-wildfires-757857>.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., *BREAKING: At Congressional Hearing, Sec. DeVos Confronted With Records Revealing Trump Administration's Unlawful Decision to Permit Federal Funds to Arm Teachers* (Apr. 10, 2019), <https://democracyforward.org/press/breaking-at-congressional-hearing-sec-devos-confronted-with-records-revealing-trump-administrations-unlawful-decision-to-permit-federal-funds-to-arm-teachers/>;

*BREAKING: New Evidence Reinforces Claim Trump's Title IX Policy Was Based on Sexist Stereotypes, Rendering it Unconstitutional* (Nov. 1, 2018), <https://democracyforward.org/press/breaking-new-evidence-reinforces-claim-trumps-title-ix-policy-was-based-on-sexist-stereotypes-rendering-it-unconstitutional/>; *On 1-Year Anniversary of Equal Pay Roll Back, New Documents Reveal Ivanka Trump's Role in Trump Administration Decision to Roll Back Protections for Women and Working Families* (Aug. 29, 2018), <https://democracyforward.org/press/on-1-year-anniversary-of-equal-pay-roll-back-new-documents-reveal-ivanka-trumps-role-in-trump-administration-decision-to-roll-back-protections-for-women-and-working-families/>; *Democracy Forward Demands Ethics Investigation into White House Official's Role in Developing Special Drug Pricing Project With Novartis* (July 11, 2018), <https://democracyforward.org/press/democracy-forward-demands-ethics-investigation-into-white-house-officials-role-in-developing-special-drug-pricing-project-with-novartis/>; *BREAKING: New Records Reveal DeVos Senior Advisor And Former For-Profit College Executive Directed Rollback of Protections Against Predatory Student Loans* (May 15, 2018), <https://democracyforward.org/press/breaking-new-records-reveal-devos-senior-advisor-former-profit-college-executive-directed-rollback-protections-predatory-student-loans/>; *BREAKING: New Records Suggest Trump-Appointed Political Officials Drove HHS Decision To End Program Grants That Have Helped Reduce Teen Pregnancy Rates To All-Time Low* (Mar. 20, 2018), <https://democracyforward.org/press/breaking-new-records-suggest-trump-appointed-political-officials-drove-hhs-decision-end-program-grants-helped-reduce-teen-pregnancy-rates-time-low/>.

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., the following tweets and tweet threads from @DemocracyFwd: <https://twitter.com/DemocracyFwd/status/910123899035226112> (Sep. 19, 2017); <https://twitter.com/DemocracyFwd/status/976991060680462336> (Mar. 22, 2018); <https://twitter.com/DemocracyFwd/status/996480908877271042> (May 15, 2018); <https://twitter.com/DemocracyFwd/status/998986714105483264> (May 22, 2018); <https://twitter.com/DemocracyFwd/status/1022870550769754112> (July 27, 2018); <https://twitter.com/DemocracyFwd/status/1035144352345903105> (Aug. 30, 2018); <https://twitter.com/DemocracyFwd/status/1053294640382779392> (Oct. 19, 2018); <https://twitter.com/DemocracyFwd/status/1071105652867690496> (Dec. 7, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Second Amended Complaint for Injunctive Relief at 31, *SurvJustice, Inc., et al. v. DeVos et al.*, No. 3:18-cv-00535-JSC (N.D. Cal. Oct. 31, 2018), ECF No. 86, reported on in Klein, *supra* n. 8; Memorandum of Law in Support of Plaintiffs' Motion for Preliminary and Permanent Injunction at 14-15, *Healthy Teen Network and*

*Democracy Forward Foundation is a purely noncommercial requester.*

Democracy Forward Foundation is not filing this Request to further its commercial interest, and any information disclosed by DFF as a result of this FOIA request will be disclosed at no cost. A fee waiver would fulfill Congress's legislative intent in amending FOIA. *See Judicial Watch*, 326 F.3d at 1312 ("Congress amended FOIA to ensure that it be liberally construed in favor of waivers for noncommercial requesters." (quotation marks omitted)).

*Democracy Forward is a representative of the news media*

A representative of the news media is one that "publishes or otherwise disseminates information to the public," and in particular one that "gathers information from a variety of sources; exercises a significant degree of editorial discretion in deciding what documents to use and how to organize them; devises indices and finding aids; and distributes the resulting work to the public." *Nat'l Sec. Archive v. US Dep't of Defense*, 880 F.2d 1381, 1387 (D.C. Cir. 1989).

Representatives of the news media qualify for a waiver of all fees except "reasonable standard charges for document duplication" as a representative of the news media pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II).

As documented above, DFF extensively disseminates information gathered through FOIA requests to the public, via sharing that information with other news outlets, publishing and sending press releases and other updates to our website and email list, and alerting our followers on social media to new developments in our work, including highlights from documents obtained through FOIA. This process entails a great degree of editorial discretion in deciding which documents to highlight and how to organize them for the public, as our team of lawyers and policy experts carefully examine and build a thorough understanding of the documents we receive from FOIA and their relationship to policies of interest to the public.

Beyond disseminating information to reporters for them to publish, and sharing press releases and updates, Democracy Forward has also sought to disseminate information directly to the public through reports and opinion pieces written by our staff.<sup>12</sup>

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*Mayor and City Council of Baltimore v. Azar and U.S. Dep't of Health and Human Services*, No. 1:18-cv-00468-CCB (D. Md. Mar. 27, 2018), ECF No. 18-1, reported on in Przybyla, *supra* n. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *See, e.g., A Blueprint for Cronyism: President Trump's Illegal Infrastructure Plan to Enrich His Friends*, Democracy Forward Foundation (Jan. 30, 2018), <https://democracyforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Infrastructure-Report.pdf>; Elana Schor, *Trump critics seize on developer ties to infrastructure plan*, Politico (Jan. 30, 2018), <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/30/trump-infrastructure-developers-state-of-union-376326> (press coverage of DFF's report on White House infrastructure policy); *Airlines and the Trump Administration*, Democracy Forward Foundation (Jan. 11, 2018), <https://democracyforward.org/updates/airlines-and-the-trump-administration/>; Bart Jansen, *Lost bags, airline fees: Protections for travelers rights stall under Trump*, USA Today (Jan. 19, 2018), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/01/19/lost-bags-airline-fees-protections-travelers-rights-stall-under-trump/1043879001/> (press coverage utilizing the information DFF organized regarding regulatory changes); *What Has Trump Done on Guns? A Lot.*, Democracy Forward Foundation (Feb. 21, 2018), <https://democracyforward.org/updates/trump-done-guns-lot/>; Christi Parsons, *Trump 'supportive' of tougher gun law, but his record suggests that may not mean much*, LA Times (Feb. 20, 2018) (press coverage utilizing the information DFF organized regarding regulatory changes); Anne Harkavy and Farhana Khera, *When the Trump administration lies, it might literally be illegal: Learn about the Information Quality Act*, NY Daily News (Feb. 14,



For all the foregoing reasons, Democracy Forward Foundation qualifies for a fee waiver. If the request for a waiver is denied, we are willing to pay all reasonable fees incurred for searching and duplicating records in responding to this request, up to \$100. If the costs of responding to this request should exceed that amount, please contact us before incurring costs exceeding that amount.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

If you need clarification as to the scope of the request, have any questions, or foresee any obstacles to releasing fully the requested records within the 20-day period, please contact Benjamin Seel as soon as possible at [foia@democracyforward.org](mailto:foia@democracyforward.org) or [202-448-9090](tel:202-448-9090). We appreciate your assistance and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

/s/ Benjamin Seel

Benjamin Seel

Democracy Forward Foundation

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2019), <https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-when-the-trump-administration-lies-it-might-literally-be-illegal-20190213-story.html> (piece co-authored by DFF executive director); Meg Uzzell and Rachael Klarman, *Why These Women Are Suing Trump to Help End the Gender Pay Gap*, Teen Vogue (Nov. 28, 2017), <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/women-sue-trump-gender-pay-gap> (piece authored by two members of DFF's staff).