



The “FOIA Ombudsman” at Work

The Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) opened its doors in September 2009. Requests for assistance from Freedom of Information Act requesters and agency officials were quick to follow. The office was created as a government-wide FOIA ombudsman and was established through the OPEN Government Act of 2007, which amended the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 552).

OGIS is reviewing agency compliance with FOIA and will recommend policy changes to Congress and the President to improve the law’s administration. As part of this OGIS is soliciting and receiving comments and questions from agencies and the public regarding the administration of FOIA. OGIS is informally mediating disputes between FOIA requesters and agencies and can offer formal mediation services for more complex disputes.

OGIS supports the work of FOIA Public Liaisons, an agency function also established by Congress in the OPEN Government Act of 2007. OGIS is offering training for FOIA Public Liaisons in the area of dispute resolution. We will expand our work with these key agency staff by sharing best practices and offering assistance whenever possible.

Since OGIS was established, the office has:

- opened 30 cases in 2009 and resolved 29 of them as of May 5, 2010
- opened 176 cases thus far in 2010 and resolved 120 of them as of May 5, 2010
- created and conducted a Dispute Resolution Skills Training for FOIA Public Liaisons in conjunction with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and Department of Justice, and met with representatives from other agencies to begin and to discuss using existing mediation programs to resolve disputes
- given numerous presentations on the new office in government and non-government training sessions, informal meetings, formal events and congressional hearings

OGIS is committed to transparency and openness in government and will keep the public informed of its progress through its Web site: www.archives.gov/ogis. The site features a weekly update of the OGIS Case Log, which tracks requests for assistance.