

# **Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation's FY 2010 FOIA Report to the U.S. Department of Justice**

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), as amended by the “Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments of 1996,” and “2009 Guidelines for Agency Preparation of Annual FOIA Reports” created by the Office of Information and Privacy, Department of Justice, the following information reflects the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation’s (PBGC) activity in administering the FOIA during fiscal year 2010.

## **I. BASIC INFORMATION REGARDING REPORT**

1. Name, title, address, and telephone number of person(s) to be contacted with questions about the report:

E. William FitzGerald, Disclosure Officer  
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation  
1200 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005-4026  
(202) 326-4040

2. Electronic address for report on the World Wide Web:

**<http://www.pbgc.gov/docs/foia2010.pdf>**

3. How to obtain a copy of the report in paper form:

A paper copy of the report can be obtained by calling the Office of the General Counsel, Disclosure Division, PBGC at (202) 326-4040 or by printing a copy at the Web address listed in I.B above.

## **II. MAKING A FOIA REQUEST**

1. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of all individual agency components and offices that receive FOIA requests:

PBGC, Office of the General Counsel  
Attention E. William FitzGerald, Disclosure Officer  
Suite 11107  
1200 K Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20005-4026  
Phone (202) 326-4040

A FOIA request should include a description of the requested records, an assurance that the requester is willing to pay the fees, if any, associated with processing the request, and the complete address of the requester. In addition, it is helpful to provide a phone number where the requester can be reached during business hours so that any questions regarding the scope of the request can be resolved quickly. If the requester is unsure of how to describe the records they desire or has specific questions relating to processing of a request, they should call the FOIA staff for advice at (202) 326-4040 prior to filing their request.

2. Brief description of why some requests are not granted and an overview of certain general categories of the agency's records to which the FOIA exemptions applies

Some requests are not granted because one or more of the exemptions from FOIA's disclosure requirement applied to the records requested. In the vast majority of cases, denial of access to records involved requests by third parties for information about individuals. Generally, information about an individual will not be disclosed by PBGC if it could result in an invasion of privacy. Other denials were in response to subpoenas served on PBGC seeking information about benefits due individual participants from pension plans trusted by the PBGC.

In addition, a number of denials involved requests for confidential commercial or financial information that had been submitted to PBGC. In some instances, PBGC did not possess any of the records that were requested.

Records subject to disclosure and application of FOIA exemptions includes, in part, records submitted to PBGC and created by PBGC in connection with processing distress plan terminations, or standard termination filing. Comments on proposed regulations and documents outlining PBGC policies and procedures as well as documents underlying PBGC policies and procedures.

### **III. ACRONYMS, DEFINITIONS, AND EXEMPTIONS**

1. Agency-specific acronyms or other terms:

None

2. Definitions of terms used in this report:

- a. **Administrative Appeal** — A request to a federal agency asking that it review at a higher administrative level FOIA determination made by the agency at the initial request level.
- b. **Average Number** — The number obtained by dividing the sum of a group of numbers by the quantity of numbers in the group. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the average number is 8.
- c. **Backlog** — The number of requests or administrative appeals that are pending at an agency at the end of the fiscal year that are beyond the statutory time period for a response.
- d. **Component** — For agencies that process requests on a decentralized basis, a “component” is an entity, also sometimes referred to as an Office, Division, Bureau, Center, or Directorate, within the agency that processes FOIA requests. The FOIA now requires that agencies include in their Annual FOIA Report data for both the agency overall and for each principal component of the agency.

NOTE: PBGC does not process requests on a decentralized basis and therefore does not have multiple components.

- e. **Consultation** — The procedure whereby the agency responding to a FOIA request first forwards a record to another agency for its review because that agency has an interest in the document. Once the agency in receipt of the consultation finishes its review of the record, it responds back to the agency that forwarded it. That agency, in turn, will then respond to the FOIA requester.
- f. **Exemption 3 Statute** — A federal statute that exempts information from disclosure and which the agency relies on to withhold information under subsection (b)(3) of the FOIA.
- g. **FOIA/PA Request** — A FOIA request is generally a request for access to records concerning another person (i.e., a “third-party” request), or concerning an organization, or a particular topic of interest. FOIA requests also include requests made by requesters seeking records concerning themselves (i.e., “first-party” requests) when those requesters are not subject to the Privacy Act, such as non-U.S. citizens. Moreover, because all first-party requesters should be afforded the benefit of both the access provisions of the FOIA as well as those of the Privacy Act, FOIA requests also include any first-party requests where an agency determines that it must search beyond its Privacy Act “systems of records” or where

a Privacy Act exemption applies, and the agency looks to FOIA to afford the greatest possible access. All requests which require the agency to utilize the FOIA in responding to the requester are included in this report.

Additionally, a FOIA request includes records referred to the agency for processing and direct response to the requester. It does not, however, include records for which the agency has received a consultation from another agency. (Consultations are reported separately in Section XII of this report.)

NOTE: PBGC treats all requests for access to records, regardless of which law is cited by the requester, as FOIA and PA requests.

- h. **Full Grant** — An agency decision to disclose all records in full in response to a FOIA request.
- i. **Full Denial** — An agency decision not to release any records in response to a FOIA request because the records are exempt in their entirety under one or more of the FOIA exemptions, or for some procedural reason, such as when no records could be located.
- j. **Median Number** — The middle, not average, number. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the median number is 7.
- k. **Multi-track Processing** — A system in which simple requests requiring relatively minimal review are placed in one processing track and more voluminous and complex requests are placed in one or more other tracks. Requests granted expedited processing are placed in yet another track. Requests in each track are processed on a first-in/first out basis.
  - i. **Expedited Processing** — An agency will process a FOIA request on an expedited basis when a requester satisfies the requirements for expedited processing as set forth in the statute and in agency regulations.
  - ii. **Simple Request** — A FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in its fastest (non-expedited) track based on the low volume and/or simplicity of the records requested.
  - iii. **Complex Request** — A FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in a slower track based on the high volume and/or complexity of the records requested.

1. **Partial Grant/Partial Denial** — In response to a FOIA request, an agency decision to disclose portions of the records and to withhold other portions that are exempt under the FOIA, or to otherwise deny a portion of the request for a procedural reason.
  - m. **Pending Request or Pending Administrative Appeal** — A request or administrative appeal for which an agency has **not** taken final action in all respects.
  - n. **Perfect Request** — A request for records which reasonably describes such records and is made in accordance with published rules stating the time, place, fees (if any), and procedures to be followed.
  - o. **Processed Request or Processed Administrative Appeal** — A request or administrative appeal for which an agency has taken final action in all respects.
  - p. **Range in Number of Days** — The lowest and highest number of days to process requests or administrative appeals.
  - q. **Time Limits** — The time period in the statute for an agency to respond to a FOIA request (ordinarily twenty working days from receipt of a perfected FOIA request).
3. Concise description of FOIA exemptions:

An agency may withhold information from disclosure if the information requested is the kind described in any of the nine exemptions listed in the FOIA.

- a. **Exemption 1:** Classified national defense and foreign relations information
- b. **Exemption 2:** Internal agency rules and practices
- c. **Exemption 3:** Information that is prohibited from disclosure by another federal law
- d. **Exemption 4:** Trade secrets and other confidential business information
- e. **Exemption 5:** Inter-agency or intra-agency communications that are protected by legal privileges
- f. **Exemption 6:** Information involving matters of personal privacy
- g. **Exemption 7:** Records or information compiled for law

enforcement purposes, to the extent that the production of those records (A) could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceeding's, (B) would deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, (C) could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, (D) could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source, (E) would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, or (F) could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual Law enforcement information: Release would interfere with on going proceedings

- h. **Exemption 8:** Information relating to the supervision of financial institutions
- i. **Exemption 9:** Geological information on wells

**IV. EXEMPTION 3 STATUTES**

Exemption 3 Statutes Relied Upon to Withhold Information

Statute	Type of Information Withheld	Case Citation	Number of Times Relied Upon per Component	Total Number of Times Relied Upon by Agency
NONE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**V. FOIA/PA REQUESTS**

Note that PBGC does not have multiple components. All data for all sections below are referring to the agency overall.

A. Received, Processed and Pending FOIA Requests

	Number of Requests Pending as of Start of Fiscal Year	Number of Requests Received in Fiscal Year	Number of Requests Processed in Fiscal Year	Number of Requests Pending as of End of Fiscal Year
<b>Agency Overall</b>	152	5,834	5,611	375

B(1). Disposition of FOIA Requests — All Processed Requests

	Number of Full Grants	Number of Partial Grants/ Partial Denials	Number of Full Denials Based on Exemptions	Number of Full Denials Based on Reasons Other than Exemptions									Total
				No Records	All Records Referred to Another Agency	Request Withdrawn	Fee-Related Reason	Records Not Reasonably Described	Improper FOIA Request for Other Reason	Not Agency Record	Duplicate Request	Other (see B(2))	
<b>Agency Overall</b>	3,989	233	6	26	2	3	0	1	33	1	579	738	5,611

B(2). Disposition of FOIA Requests — “Other” Reasons for “Full Denials Based on Reasons Other Than Exemptions” from Section V.B(1) Chart Above

	Description of “Other” Reasons for Full Denials	Total
<b>Agency Overall</b>	The requester did not submit proper authorization to receive access to another individual’s records and did not respond to PBGC’s request for proper authorization or other identifying information..	738





**VII. FOIA REQUESTS: RESPONSE TIME FOR PROCESSED AND PENDING REQUESTS**

PBGC processes all non-Expedited requests received under a single track, which for the purpose of the tables below has been designated **Standard**.

PBGC received **3** requests for expedited processing in FY2010, and chose to grant **all 3** expedited status based on the nature of the information requested.

A. Processed Requests — Response Time for All Processed Perfected Requests

	Standard Processing				Expedited Processing			
	Median	Average	Lowest	Highest	Median	Average	Lowest	Highest
Agency Overall	6	6	0	43	6	6	1	12

B. Processed Requests — Response Time for Perfected Requests in which Information was Granted

	Standard				Expedited Processing			
	Median	Average	Lowest	Highest	Median	Average	Lowest	Highest
Agency Overall	6	7	0	43	6	6	1	12

C. Processed Requests — Response Time in Day Increments

	1 - 20 Days	21 - 40 Days	41 - 60 Days	61 - 80 Days	81 - 100 Days	101 - 120 Days	121 - 140 Days	141 - 160 Days	161 - 180 Days	181 - 200 Days	201 - 300 Days	301 - 400 Days	401+ Days	Total
<b>Standard Requests</b>														
<b>Agency Overall</b>	5,562	42	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5,611
<b>n/a</b>														
<b>Agency Overall</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Requests Granted Expedited Processing</b>														
<b>Agency Overall</b>	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3

D. Pending Requests — All Pending Perfected Requests

	Standard			Expedited Processing		
	Number Pending	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days	Number Pending	Median Number of Days	Average Number of Days
<b>Agency Overall</b>	375	3	8	0	0	0

E. Pending Requests — Ten Oldest Pending Perfected Requests

	10 <sup>th</sup> Oldest	9 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Oldest
<b>Date of Receipt</b>	9/13/2010	9/13/2010	9/10/2010	9/9/2010	9/7/2010	9/7/2010	8/9/2010	8/2/2010	8/2/2010	7/30/2010
<b>Number of Days Pending</b>	13	13	14	15	17	17	37	42	42	43

**VIII. REQUESTS FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING AND REQUESTS FOR FEE WAIVER**

The majority of FOIA requests which PBGC receives are submitted by members of the pension plans which PBGC has trusteeed (also known as participants). It is the PBGC Disclosure Officer’s policy to routinely waive search and review fees and duplication fees on all FOIA requests from participants.

A. Requests for Expedited Processing

	<b>Number Granted</b>	<b>Number Denied</b>	<b>Median Number of Days to Adjudicate</b>	<b>Average Number of Days to Adjudicate</b>	<b>Number Adjudicated Within Ten Calendar Days</b>
<b>Agency Overall</b>	3	0	2	2	3

B. Requests for Fee Waiver

	<b>Number Granted</b>	<b>Number Denied</b>	<b>Median Number of Days to Adjudicate</b>	<b>Average Number of Days to Adjudicate</b>
<b>Agency Overall</b>	3	0	2	2

**IX. COSTS/FOIA STAFFING**

A. Personnel

(See combined table under IX.B below)

B. Costs

	Personnel			Costs		
	Number of "Full-Time FOIA Employees"	Number of "Equivalent Full-Time FOIA Employees"	Total Number of "Full-Time FOIA Staff"	Processing Costs	Litigation-Related Costs	Total Costs
Agency Overall	9	2	11	\$1,058,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$1,068,000.00

X. FEES COLLECTED FOR PROCESSING REQUESTS

	Total Amount of Fees Collected	Percentage of Total Costs
Agency Overall	\$6,194.20	0.579%

XI. FOIA REGULATIONS (INCLUDING FEE SCHEDULE)

PBGC FOIA regulations are available online at:

<http://www.pbgc.gov/practitioners/law-regulations-informal-guidance/content/page14789.html>

XII. BACKLOGS, CONSULTATIONS AND COMPARISONS

A. Backlogs of FOIA Requests and Administrative Appeals

Number of Backlogged Requests as of End of Fiscal Year	Number of Backlogged Appeals as of End of Fiscal Year
0	0

B. Consultations on FOIA Requests — Received, Processed, and Pending Consultations

<b>Number of Consultations Received From Other Agencies that were Pending as of Start of the Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Consultations Received From Other Agencies During the Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Consultations Received From Other Agencies that were Processed During the Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of Consultations Received From Other Agencies that were Pending as of End of the Fiscal Year</b>
0	0	0	0

C. Consultations on FOIA Requests — Ten Oldest Consultations Received from Other Agencies and Pending at PBGC

	<b>10<sup>th</sup> Oldest</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Oldest</b>
<b>Date of Receipt</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Number of Days Pending</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

D. Comparison of Numbers of Requests from Previous and Current Annual Report – Requests Received, Processed, and Backlogged

<b>Number of Requests Received</b>		<b>Number of Requests Processed</b>	
<b>Number Received During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report</b>	<b>Number Received During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report</b>	<b>Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report</b>	<b>Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report</b>
4,526	5,834	4,512	5,611

E. Comparison of Numbers of Administrative Appeals from Previous and Current Annual Report –Appeals Received, Processed, and Backlogged

Number of Appeals Received		Number of Appeals Processed	
Number Received During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report	Number Received During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report	Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Last Year's Annual Report	Number Processed During Fiscal Year from Current Annual Report
2	4	2	3

F. Discussion of Other FOIA Activities

We continued our efforts to improve customer service. In fiscal year 2010, PBGC received 5,834 FOIA requests and processed 5,611 requests. The average time to process a standard request was 7 working days. Our electronic software, used to process requests since 1999, was able to meet new reporting requirements with only minor modifications. PBGC received only four appeals of denials during the fiscal year. Since the majority of our requests are received from pension plan participants who are in trustee plans we insure, we directly enable those participants to access and examine critical documents that are relied on to calculate their individual pension benefits.