

# **Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation's FY 2006 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 “Guidelines for Agency Preparation and Submission of Annual FOIA Reports” created by the Office of Information Policy, Department of Justice, the following information reflects the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation’s (PBGC) activity in administering the FOIA during fiscal year 2006.

## **I. Basic Information Regarding Report**

- A. 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.

- B. Electronic address for report on the World Wide Web.

[http://www.pbgc.gov/media/  
key-resources-for-the-press/content/page13687.html](http://www.pbgc.gov/media/key-resources-for-the-press/content/page13687.html)

- C. 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 “B” above.

## **II. How to Make a FOIA Request**

Agencies may either include description here or provide them by cross-reference to their FOIA reference guides.

A FOIA request may be filed by addressing a written request to E. William FitzGerald, Disclosure Officer, PBGC, 1200 K Street, N.W., Washington D.C. 20005-4026. The 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.

- A. 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

- B. Brief description of the agency's response-time ranges.

For fiscal year 2006 (October 1, 2005 - September 30, 2006), the PBGC's median response time for responding to FOIA requests was **7** days. Typically, the requests that took more than 20 days to process involved the search and review of voluminous records, or required consultation with other agencies or third parties that submitted information to PBGC. For requests accorded expedited treatment, the PBGC's median response time was 4 days.

- C. Brief description of why some requests are not granted.

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. 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, or the request was referred to another agency for processing.

### III. Definition of Terms and Acronyms Used in the Report

- A. Agency-specific acronyms or other terms.

None

- B. Basic terms, expressed in common terminology.

1. **FOIA/PA request** -- A FOIA request is generally a request for access to records concerning a third party, an organization, or a particular topic of interest. A Privacy Act request is a request for records concerning oneself; such requests are also treated as FOIA requests. (All requests for access to records, regardless of which law is cited by the requester, are included in this report.)

2. **Initial Request** -- A request to a federal agency for access to records under the Freedom of Information Act.
3. **Appeal** -- a request to a federal agency asking that it review at a higher administrative level a full denial or partial denial of access to records under the Freedom of Information Act, or any other FOIA determination such as a matter pertaining to fees.
4. **Processed Request or Appeal** -- a request or appeal for which an agency has taken a final action on the request or the appeal in all aspects.
5. **Multi-track processing** -- a system in which simple requests requiring minimal review are placed in one processing track and more voluminous and complex requests are placed in one or more other tracks. Requests in each track are processed on a first-in/first out basis. A requester who has an urgent need for records may request expedited processing (see below).
6. **Expedited processing** -- an agency will process a FOIA request on an expedited basis when a requester has shown an exceptional need or urgency for the records which warrants prioritization of his or her request over other requests that were made earlier.
7. **Simple request** -- a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in its fastest (nonexpedited) track based on the volume and/or simplicity of records requested.
8. **Complex request** -- a FOIA request that an agency using multi-track processing places in a slower track based on the volume and/or complexity of records requested.
9. **Grant** -- an agency decision to disclose all records in full in response to a FOIA request.
10. **Partial grant** -- an agency decision to disclose a record in part in response to a FOIA request, deleting information determined to be exempt under one or more of the FOIA's exemptions; or a decision to disclose some records in their entirety, but to withhold others in whole or part.
11. **Denial** -- an agency decision not to release any part of a record or records in response to a FOIA request because all the information in the requested records is determined by the agency to be exempt under one or more of the FOIA's exemptions, or for some procedural reason (such as because no record is located in response to a FOIA request).

12. **Time limits** -- the time period in the Freedom of Information Act for an agency to respond to a FOIA request (ordinarily 20 working days from proper receipt of a “perfected” FOIA request).
13. **“Perfected” request** -- a FOIA request for records which adequately describes the records sought, which has been received by the FOIA office of the agency or agency component in possession of the records, and for which there is no remaining question about the payment of applicable fees.
14. **Exemption 3 statute** -- a separate federal statute prohibiting the disclosure of a certain type of information and authorizing its withholding under FOIA subsection (b)(3).
15. **Median number** -- the middle, not average, number. For example, of 3, 7, and 14, the median number is 7.
16. **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.

#### IV. Exemption 3 Statutes

- A. List of exemption 3 statutes relied on by agency during the current fiscal year.

##### **29 U.S.C. § 4010 (c)**

1. Brief description of types of information withheld under each statute.

Information submitted by pension plan sponsors to PBGC pursuant to 29 U.S.C. § 4010 is exempt from disclosure under §552 of title 5, United States Code.

2. Statement of whether a court has upheld the use of each statute. If so, then cite example.

We are not aware of any court case regarding PBGC’s use of 29 U.S.C. § 4010 (c) as an exemption 3 statute.

#### V. Initial FOIA/PA Access Requests

This should include all access requests whether first-party or third-party.

- A. Number of initial requests.

Total of the numbers in Lines 1 and 2, minus the number in line 3, should equal the number in line 4.

1. Number of requests pending as of the end of the preceding fiscal year	<b>275</b>
2. Number of requests received during current fiscal year	<b>2,560</b>
3. Number of requests processed during current fiscal year	<b>2,714</b>
4. Number of requests pending as of the end of current fiscal year	<b>121</b>

B. Disposition of initial requests.

1. Number of total grants	<b>1,867</b>
2. Number of partial grants	<b>237</b>
3. Number of denials	<b>14</b>

A. Number of times each FOIA exemption used (counting **each exemption once per request**)

(1) Exemption 1	<b>0</b>
(2) Exemption 2	<b>1</b>
(3) Exemption 3	<b>19</b>
(4) Exemption 4	<b>57</b>
(5) Exemption 5	<b>39</b>
(6) Exemption 6	<b>202</b>
(7) Exemption 7(A)	<b>0</b>
(8) Exemption 7(B)	<b>0</b>
(9) Exemption 7(C)	<b>2</b>
(10) Exemption 7(D)	<b>0</b>
(11) Exemption 7(E)	<b>0</b>
(12) Exemption 7(F)	<b>0</b>
(13) Exemption 8	<b>0</b>
(14) Exemption 9	<b>0</b>

4. Other reasons for nondisclosure (total)	<b>596</b>
a. No records	<b>15</b>
b. Referrals	<b>26</b>
c. Request withdrawn	<b>13</b>
d. Fee-related reason	<b>1</b>
e. Records not reasonably described	<b>4</b>
f. Not a proper FOIA request for some other reason	<b>22</b>
g. Not an agency record	<b>4</b>
h. Duplicate request	<b>158</b>
i. Other (specify)	<b>353</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.

#### VI. Appeals of Initial Denials of FOIA/PA Requests

This should include all access requests, whether first-party or third-party.

##### A. Number of appeals.

1. Number of appeals received during fiscal year	<b>5</b>
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We attribute this low number of appeals in part to sound and easy to understand written and oral communications with requesters providing adequate explanations of basis of any full or partial denials of access to records.

2. Number of appeals processed during the fiscal year	<b>4</b>
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##### B. Disposition of appeals.

1. Number completely upheld	<b>2</b>
2. Number partially reversed	<b>0</b>
3. Number completely reversed	<b>1</b>

A. Number of times each FOIA exemption used (counting each exemption once per appeal)

1. Exemption 1	0
2. Exemption 2	0
3. Exemption 3	1
4. Exemption 4	1
5. Exemption 5	2
6. Exemption 6	2
7. Exemption 7(A)	0
8. Exemption 7(B)	0
9. Exemption 7(C)	0
10. Exemption 7(D)	0
11. Exemption 7(E)	0
12. Exemption 7(F)	0
13. Exemption 8	0
14. Exemption 9	0
4. Other reasons for nondisclosure (total)	1
a. No records	1
b. Referrals	0
c. Request withdrawn	0
d. Fee-related reason	0
e. Records not reasonably described	0
f. Not a proper FOIA request for some other reason	0
g. Not an agency record	0
h. Duplicate request	0
i. Other (specify)	0

## VII. Compliance with Time Limits/Status of pending requests

Agencies should count days from the time at which a request is “perfected.”

Agencies should separately report each track of a multi-track system, as well as an “expedited processing” track, and may report any other type of request at their option.

Example for calculation of median: Given the requests completed during the fiscal year, aged 10, 25, 35, 65, 75, 80, and 400 days from the date of perfection to date of completion, the total number of requests completed during the fiscal year would be 7 and the median age of the completed requests would be 65 days.

Example for calculation of median: If there were 6 pending cases aged 10, 20, 30, 50, 120, and 200 days from the date of perfection to date of completion, the total number of requests completed would be 6 and the median age would be 40 days (the average of the 2 middle numbers).

### A. Median processing time for requests processed during the year.

#### 1. Simple requests (if multiple tracks used).

N/A

- a. Number of requests processed
- b. Median number of days to process

#### 2. Complex requests (specify for any and all tracks used).

- a. Number of requests processed

**We do not have a multiple track system; however, we did process a total of 2,699 requests during FY 2006.**

- b. Median number of days to process

**The median number of days to process all types of requests in FY 2006 was 13.**

#### 3. Requests accorded expedited processing.

- a. Number of requests processed **15**
- b. Median number of days to process **5**

B. Status of pending requests.

Agencies using multiple tracks may provide numbers for each track, as well as totals.

1. Number of requests pending as of end of current fiscal year **121**
2. Median number of days that such requests were pending as of that date **14**

VIII. Comparisons with Previous Year(s) (Optional)

The number of FOIA requests received in FY 2006 (2,560) increased 60% over the number of FOIA requests received in FY 2005 (1,603). This was in part due to the continued large number of participants coming into PBGC from large plan terminations that took place in FY 2005 & FY 2006 as well as greater use of our "FOIA Guide" on PBGC's web site which explains how to file a FOIA request.

The median number of days required to process a request decreased from 17 in FY 2005 to 13 in FY 2006 due to the more efficient use of electronic FOIA software and other improvements noted below in the discussion of PBGC's FOIA Improvement Plan.

We received 0 requests for expedited processing but granted 15 requests expedited treatment based on descriptive information contained in each request.

IX. Costs/FOIA Staffing

Both large and small agencies should provide information in the format presented below.

A. Staffing levels.

1. Number of full-time FOIA personnel **7**
2. Number of personnel with part-time or occasional FOIA duties (in total work-years) **.5**
3. Total number of personnel (in work-years) **7.5**

B. Total costs (including staff and all resources).

1. FOIA processing (including appeals) **\$766,372**
2. Litigation-related activities (estimated) **None, no litigation**
3. Total costs **\$766,372**

4. Comparison with previous year(s) (including percentage of change) (optional).

Between FY 2005 (\$568,840) and FY 2006 (\$766,372) a 35% increase in processing costs occurred. This increase can be attributable to the 3.44% increase in salary for federal employees, 4% increase in contract related expenses and 27.56% increase in non-personnel costs.

C. Statement of additional resources needed for FOIA compliance (optional)

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 included reforms that may have a direct impact on our FOIA processing by increasing the potential need by participants and unions for document related to terminating defined benefit pension plans. The statute requires PBGC to provide administrative records to participants in newly trustee pension plans within 15 days of receipt of a request. In addition, the recently issued Executive Order on "Improving Agency Disclosure of Information" places additional reporting responsibilities on the existing FOIA staff. Finally, the continued influx of large numbers of new participants in terminating pension plans in FY 2006 will more than likely foster an even larger number of FOIA requests in the coming year. In order to keep up with this increased demand on our FOIA staff, we will more that likely need an additional FTE devoted to processing FOIA requests in FY 2007.

X. Fees

This includes charges for search, review, document duplication, and any other direct costs permitted under agency regulations.

A. Total amount of fees collected by agency for processing requests: **\$10,995**. The majority of fees associated with participants requesting their own records as well as records relating to their pension plan were waived.

B. Percentage of total costs is **1.4%**

XI. FOIA Regulations (Including Fee Schedule)

Agencies should provide electronic link for availability in electronic form and attach copy in paper form.

[http://www.pbtc.gov/media/  
key-resources-for-the-press/content/page13687.html](http://www.pbtc.gov/media/key-resources-for-the-press/content/page13687.html)

XII. Pursuant to Executive Order 13,392 PBGC is reporting on the status of its FOIA Improvement Plan posted on PBGC's web page on June 9, 2006.

- A. Description of supplementation/modification of agency improvement plan (if applicable)

Not Applicable

- B. Report on agency implementation of its plan, including its performance in meeting milestones, with respect to each improvement area.

Under the first area selected for our improvement plan, Proactive Disclosure of Information, we have completed research and started implementing an electronic FOIA Analyst Library which will allow the analyst to maintain and share many categories of documents and templates regardless of volume of material. This will make the electronic collection and review of large number of document more efficient and thus, cut down on processing time. This will also allow us to respond to requesters faster and post frequently requested documents on our web site sooner.

The second area selected for review and improvement was our Automated Request Tracking/eFOIA Processing System. We have reviewed and completed an analysis of our eFOIA electronic tracking system and based on that analysis, we have implemented modifications to the eFOIA system to create an improved system for FY 2007. Based on the new data collected and distribution trends we have observed, we are able to use our improved eFOIA data mode to better predict workload planning and design possible process improvements for FY 2007.

The third area selected for review was Forms of Communications with Requesters/Acknowledgement Letters. Pursuant to this area we have conducted research to find a method to send large documents electronically outside PBGC. Currently our e-mail system has a limit on the size of any electronic document that is attached to an e-mail sent outside PBGC. We have developed a file transfer protocol (FTP) system which is being tested with implementation in FY 2007.

The fourth area selected for review was Cooperation with Agency Program Personnel. in a further effort to cut down on processing time for FOIA requests, we have established a FOIA Point of Contact in each PBGC department to assist FOIA analysts with collection of records maintained within their department. This should speedup the records collection process and lead to overall reduction of the time currently expanded to process a FOIA request.

The final area selected for review is the Mandatory FOIA/Privacy Act/Identify Theft Training for certain PBGC Personnel. In view of new OMB guidance, we have expanded agency FOIA, Privacy Act and Identify Theft training to insure all employees and contractors both in PBGC and our field offices have updated training in FY 2007. This will

bring about a greater awareness on behalf of employees and contractors as to PBGC's obligation to provide information to requesters in a timely fashion, the restrictions on disclosure of information maintained by PBGC, the sensitivity of the information and heighten awareness on possible identify theft attempts and what action to take to combat this problem.

We feel that the steps listed above will allow further improvement of the FOIA processing system and thus greater customer satisfaction for our FOIA requesters.

- C. Identification and discussion of any deficiency in meeting plan milestones (if applicable)

Not applicable

- D. Additional narrative statements regarding other executive order-related activities (optional)

- E. Concise description of FOIA exemptions

The nine exemptions to the FOIA authorize federal agencies to withhold information covering: (1) classified national defense and foreign relations information; (2) internal agency rules and practices; (3) information that is prohibited from disclosure by another federal law; (4) trade secrets and other confidential business information; (5) inter-agency or intra-agency communications that are protected by legal privileges; (6) information involving matters of personal privacy; (7) records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, to the extent that production of these records (A) could reasonably be expected to interfere with law enforcement proceedings, (B) would deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, (C ) could reasonable be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of person 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; (8) information relating to the supervision of financial institutions; and (9) certain geological information on wells.

F. Additional Statistics:

1. Time range of requests pending, by date of request (or where applicable, by date of referral from another agency). These dates reflect information from the 154 requests pending as of January 31, 2007.

August 21, 2006 to January 31, 2007

2. Time range of consultations pending with other agencies at this time.

Not applicable

G. Attachment: PBGC's FOIA Improvement Plan

<http://www.pbgc.gov/docs/foiaplan06.pdf>