

The FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LAW

Knowledge is Power - what kind of information can I get? // how do I get it?

"The government belongs to the people"

The Federal Freedom of Information Act

Type of information available:

All records created, possessed, or controlled by a federal agency or maintained for such an agency by an entity under government contract, unless they fall under one of the following exemptions:

1. national security
2. internal agency issues
3. info exempted by other fed law
4. trade secrets
5. internal agency memoranda
6. personal privacy
7. law enforcement records
8. bank reports
9. oil and gas well data

Requesting information

1. **Generate your need-** Why do you need the info for your story?
2. **Do your homework-** Make sure you have all the facts.
3. **Know exactly what you want and who to ask-** Preparation is key
4. **Make an verbal request in person-** Give them the 5 W's
5. **Draft & send a formal written request-** SPLC letter generator!
6. **Follow up & use info responsibly-** Always review & thank

How can I get what I need?
Just ask.

What do you want to know?

Stories are everywhere.

- information about crimes
- health code violations
- grants
- scholarships
- revenue
- salaries
- graduation rates
- athletic programs
- budgets
- board meetings
- loans
- equity
- allocation
- fights
- discrimination
- sex offenders
- building
- property
- taxes
- financial aid
- transportation costs
- waste management
- tuition
- academic standards
- punishments

December 4, 2011

Jerry Walker
Business Office/ Associate Head of School- Kent Denver
4000 Quincy Avenue, Englewood, Colorado 80113

SAMPLE

Dear Mr. Walker,

Pursuant to the state open records law, Colo. Rev. Stat. Secs. 24-72-101 to 24-72-402, I write to request access to and a copy of the IRS Form 990 for both the middle school and the upper school for the last 5 fiscal years (2005-2010) detailing the amount of money the organization has taken in each year (including grants), with a breakdown indicating the general sources and amounts of money. If your agency does not maintain these public records, please let me know who does and include the proper custodian's name and address.

I agree to pay any reasonable copying and postage fees of not more than \$50. If the cost would be greater than this amount, please notify me. Please provide a receipt indicating the charges for each document.

As provided by the open records law, I will expect your response with three (3) business days. If you choose to deny this request, please provide a written explanation for the denial including a reference to the specific statutory exemption(s) upon which you rely. Also, please provide all segregable portions of otherwise exempt material.

Please be advised that I am prepared to pursue whatever legal remedy necessary to obtain access to the requested records. I would note that willful violation of the open records law can result in a fine of up to \$100, or by imprisonment in the county jail for up to ninety (90) days, or both. See Colo. Rev. Stat. Secs. 24-72-206 and 24-72-309.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Adam A Dawkins
6400 S Lewiston Way
Aurora CO, 80016
Regis Jesuit High School
Student Newspaper Adviser, English Faculty
(303)269-8000