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From: Emily Holden [mailto:eholden@politico.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2018 12:07 PM
To: Press <Press@epa.gov>
Subject: FOIA story on deadline

Hi. I'm working on a story about how most FOIA requests to the administrator's office are going unanswered and would appreciate your response based on the following points. Our data is calculated from the records EPA provided here: https://foiaonline.regulations.gov/foia/action/public/view/request?objectId=090004d281798ac9.

1) While EPA as a whole has closed 79 percent of FOIA requests received between Jan. 20, 2017, and the end of the year, headquarters has closed 57 percent and the administrator's office has closed 17 percent.

2) FOIA requests overall are up about 17 percent—11,431 were received between Jan. 20 and the end of the year. That's compared to the same time period in the last year of the Obama administration, when EPA got 9,767 requests.

3) The administrator's office is getting far more requests. 1,181 last year compared to 236 under Obama. But 928 of those were in assignment at the beginning of the year, and only 196

were closed.

(Numbers you have provided in auto responses to FOIA requests are similar. You counted fiscal year, we looked at Jan. 20 to end of December. You said: "The workload of the OA increased due to an unprecedented amount of FOIA requests during fiscal year 2017. In fiscal year 2016, OA received only 203 FOIA requests, whereas in fiscal year 2017, OA received 1,043 FOIA requests. This is a 413% increase in FOIA requests from fiscal years 2016 to 2017."

4) FOIA lawsuits against EPA are on the rise. At current count, there are 53 pending against the Trump administration EPA (according to The FOIA Project). Many of those are about records related to the administrator.

*Why is the administrator's office responding to requests at such a lower rate than other offices? How does EPA decide which requests are routed to that office?

*Given that EPA is looking to clear a backlog of FOIAs from previous administrations, will you aim to expand your FOIA response teams or dedicate more funding to processing?

*Is EPA making efforts to speed the review process for FOIAs seeking information about the current administration?

*Is it possible that requests are up because the communications team often directs reporters to submit FOIAs for information?

Please let me know how long you might need to consult on the numbers and provide a response. We would like to publish tomorrow or Friday.

Thank you,

Emily

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