

Dear Appeals Officer:

I am writing to appeal the denial of my fee waiver request for FOIA F-2025-30283, as stated in the September 26, 2025 determination letter from Megan Farrell.

I. Financial Hardship - Inability to Pay

I am currently unable to work due to medical recovery from surgery performed in May 2025. I am surviving on unemployment benefits that barely cover my rent and basic necessities. I have no discretionary income available to pay FOIA processing fees of any amount.

I request a fee waiver based on financial hardship under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). The fees associated with this request would create genuine financial burden for someone in my circumstances.

II. Public Interest - Significant Contribution to Public Understanding

This request unquestionably serves the public interest and will contribute significantly to public understanding of government operations:

Subject Matter of Clear Public Concern:

- Documentation of how the U.S. Department of State handles American veterans stranded overseas
- Internal embassy records justifying decisions to limit, delay, or deny consular assistance
- Evidence showing whether U.S. embassies properly support American citizens in crisis or systematically abandon them
- Government accountability for treatment of veterans who served their country

Nature of My Organization:

I operate Covenant for Forgotten Warriors, a nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting abandoned veterans and exposing systemic failures in government services. This is volunteer work - I receive no salary or compensation. The requested information will be used solely to inform the public about government performance and advocate for policy improvements.

No Commercial Interest:

I have no commercial interest whatsoever in this information. CFW is a mission-driven advocacy organization, not a commercial enterprise. Any information obtained will be used exclusively for public education and government accountability purposes.

Contribution to Public Understanding:

The documents requested - internal embassy memoranda, legal justifications, and leadership communications - will reveal:

- Whether embassy officials properly document their assistance decisions or create post-hoc rationalizations
- How embassies justify withholding support from American citizens in distress
- Whether legal guidance is used to ensure compliance with consular obligations or to excuse failures
- Systemic patterns in how U.S. embassies treat stranded veterans

This information is not currently available to the public and will meaningfully inform citizens about how their government responds - or fails to respond - when Americans need help overseas.

III. Legal Standard Met

The Department's own regulations state that fees shall be waived when "disclosure of the information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of the government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester." 22 CFR § 171.16(j)(2)(ii).

This request clearly meets both prongs of that test:

1. ✓ It will contribute significantly to public understanding of State Department embassy operations and consular decision-making
2. ✓ It is not in any commercial interest - I operate a nonprofit advocacy organization

IV. Request for Relief

I respectfully request that the Department:

1. Grant a complete waiver of all fees associated with FOIA F-2025-30283 based on both financial hardship and public interest
2. Place a hold on processing until this appeal is resolved to prevent incurring fees I cannot pay
3. Reconsider the clear public interest value of documentation showing how U.S. embassies justify denying assistance to stranded veterans

The American public has a fundamental right to know how their embassies make decisions about supporting citizens in crisis abroad. Internal records showing the rationale for withholding consular assistance are precisely the type of documents that serve the public interest under FOIA.

I should not be required to pay fees I cannot afford to expose government decision-making that demands public scrutiny.

V. Contact Information

If you require any additional information regarding this appeal, please contact me at:

Email: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

I respectfully request a timely decision on this appeal and appreciate your reconsideration of this matter.