

Thirteen Common Mistakes That Reporters Make In Dealing With Government Data Issues

1. Not formulating a request for information as a data or records request as opposed to a question or special request.
2. Not taking the time to learn the basic features and actual operation of the foia or access act which is guiding the interaction between government and the reporter.
3. Not taking advantage of the various features of the foia or access statute that are designed to help you.
4. Assuming that a bureaucrat is going to be impressed with or make a special accommodation because you have told them AI=m on deadline≡.
5. Taking at face value what a government employee says to you about the accessibility or classification of government records or data.
6. Thinking that the grass is greener on the other side. (Why can=t we have a law like Florida=s?)
7. Not covering changes to access laws and the evolution of those laws by legislative bodies.
8. Not following case law developments in access laws.
9. Not being willing to spend the time necessary to understand how government actually functions and how that functioning relates to the creation and maintenance of government data, i.e. just actually what does the government do and how does that affect the information produced.
10. Not seeing the big picture. AIPA was not helpful to my paper with an opinion they did last month.≡ Try 650 opinions.
11. Not using data subjects as a source of information and for consents for releases of information.
12. Not being willing to spend countless hours looking at lots of boring and complicated government documents and data bases.
13. ~~Assuming an office like mine is supposed to take sides.~~