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The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has long supported the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as a powerful, cost-effective strategy to resolve conflicts. For the past 15 years, NARA's RESOLVE program has reduced the cost, time, and energy devoted to handling EEO and administrative grievance procedures by helping employees informally address workplace-related issues.

The passage of the OPEN Government Act of 2007 increased NARA's commitment to resolving disputes through ADR by establishing the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Ombudsman. The statute states that "the Office of Government Information Services shall offer mediation services to resolve disputes between persons making requests under this section and administrative agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation." With this statutory language, Congress established a means for FOIA requesters and agencies to resolve disputes without litigation, and NARA fully supports this mission.

As the FOIA Ombudsman, OGIS provides mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and agencies. OGIS mediates cases dealing with the administration of FOIA—such as processing delays—as well as substantive challenges to an agency's application of FOIA exemptions. In all cases, OGIS works to improve the FOIA process by facilitating communication between the requester and the agency. Since OGIS opened its doors on September 9, 2009, the office has handled nearly 5,000 FOIA disputes, including more than 1,200 disputes in Fiscal Year 2015 alone.

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OGIS and NARA strongly support the use of ADR across the federal government and its many functions, and we salute the ADR accomplishments of our colleagues on the occasion of the annual Conflict Resolution Day, October 15, 2015.

Signed,



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GARY M. STERN
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