

# american political science association

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July 26, 2004

The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair  
Senate Governmental Affairs Committee  
United State Senate  
Room SD-340  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins,

The American Political Science Association and its section on the presidency, the Presidency Research Group, are interested in issues related to the operation and management of the National Archives as well as in the nomination of Allen Weinstein to be Archivist of the United States. We hoped to present our views at your July 22<sup>nd</sup> hearings on the Weinstein nomination, but the short-notice session allowed no room to place on the public record the views of the constituents of the National Archives. We are disappointed those who use the Archives have been shut out of the nomination and oversight process and hope there are plans by the committee to hold hearings about Archives management issues.

Our organizations represent 15,000 scholars and others interested in issues related to the acquisition and availability of governmental records. We believe the proper accumulation, maintenance, and dissemination of records are issues of great importance not only to the scholarly community, but ultimately to governmental officials and to the public as well. In a representative government, the public needs to have information available in order to understand the actions and decisions of government officials.

Under the leadership of Archivist John Carlin, the National Archives made substantial advances in the management of the institution. He settled the many distracting lawsuits that long plagued the Archives, established firm relations with the Congress and with the Office of Management and Budget, developed strong budgets supported within a variety of public and private sectors, instituted an electronic records program, achieved great advances in funding the preservation of audiovisual records, and developed a strategic plan. All of the above were important management practices that can and should be built upon by Archivist Carlin's successor. There are several specific issues requiring all of our attention as the National Archives moves into the next phase of its history.

Access Issues in the Presidential Libraries. Records are often difficult to access because of the lack of resources available to review them. After fourteen years, only 20% of the presidential records in the Ronald Reagan Library have been processed. It is important to have resources available commensurate with the obligations of the National Archives. The presidential library system is barely trading water when it comes to the processing of records as there are so many Freedom of Information Act requests and now electronic records in their newer libraries that the libraries' resources are stretched beyond what they can deliver.

Important questions remain for the implementation of Executive Order 13233 on presidential records. The executive order has slowed down the release of records and their subsequent availability.

In recent months, the President's Daily Brief has come into public discussion. The PDB has long been regarded as a document belonging within the collection of presidential records and available through the individual libraries. In the last three administrations, however, the presidents returned the individual PDB documents to the Central Intelligence Agency at the behest of the Agency. The original rules should apply where the PDB remains with the President's records as it is a presidential record in the full sense of the term and is important to an understanding of his administration and its policies. The PDB is a document created for the use of the President and should remain with his records.

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Digitizing Records. The National Archives has yet to develop a strategy for delivering documents on the web. In that effort, the Archives should seek partners in order to bring in the most effective ways to digitize records. While the Archives could not be expected to have digitized four billion pages, a better strategy is needed for making available important historical documents beyond the walls of the Archives building.

There is a great deal of work needing to be done on the Electronic Records Archives (ERA). Within the presidential library system, the electronic records found in the libraries of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W Bush remain unavailable to the public and to archivists as well. In order to effectively manage their digital resources, partnerships with private industry should be explored.

Staff Training. There has not been an archival training class in six years, which means they have not been developing staff to replace retiring archivists. Through training, archivists learn what developments are taking place outside of the National Archives at places in foreign and state archives, historical societies, universities, and staying up with the latest research.

Encouraging Use of Records through Outreach. The Archives is an important research resource yet its holdings are not well known to those who are potential users of its records. They need to expand the use of the Archives to those beyond the scholarly community to citizens who can learn to use primary resources. Increasing the education programs in the National Archives would benefit all those interested in the workings of government and in public service.

We would be happy to talk to you about these issues as you prepare for oversight hearings and to assist you in any way as you work through the nomination process. Constituent groups have a great deal of information on archival issues and can be a effective resource for you as you develop information relevant to the nomination of Allen Weinstein to be the Archivist of the United States. We would like our letter to appear as part of the public record on the Allen Weinstein nomination.

Sincerely,



Susanne Hoerber Rudolph  
President, American Political Science Association



Michael A. Genovese  
President, Presidency Research Group,  
a section of the American Political Science Association