

**STATEMENT OF
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Before
The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government
Information, Federal Services, and International Security**

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Senators Carper and Coburn let me begin by thanking you for holding this hearing today. This is my first opportunity to testify before you since my confirmation hearing a little over three years ago. I am pleased to return today to report on the progress at the National Archives and Records Administration during my tenure of three years and three months. There is much to report, and I can only touch on the highlights here; however, I will be happy to answer any questions you might have, and provide for the record whatever supplemental information you might need.

Let me begin with a few words about the National Archives's vision, mission, and strategic goals—the controlling ambitions that guide our efforts.

First, our vision:

As the nation's record keeper, it is our vision that every American will understand the vital role records play in a democracy, and their own personal stake in the National Archives. Our holdings and diverse programs will be available to more people than ever before through modern technology and dynamic partnerships. The stories of our nation and our people are told in the records and artifacts cared for in NARA facilities around the country. We want every American to be inspired to explore the records of their country.

Then, NARA's mission:

The National Archives and Records Administration serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our government, ensuring that the people can

discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage. We ensure continuing access to the essential documentation of the rights of American citizens and the actions of their government. We support democracy, promote civic education, and facilitate historical understanding of our national experience.

Finally, six strategic goals:

- *One:* As the nation's record keeper, we will ensure the continuity and effective operations of Federal programs by expanding our leadership and services in managing the government's records.
- *Two:* We will preserve and process records for opening to the public as soon as legally possible.
- *Three:* We will solve the challenges of electronic records in the government.
- *Four:* We will provide prompt, easy, and secure access to our holdings anywhere, anytime.
- *Five:* We will increase civic literacy in America through our museum, public outreach, and education programs.
- *Six:* We will equip NARA to meet the changing needs of our customers.

Today, I would like to talk to you about a few activities that illustrate our commitment to our vision, mission, and strategic goals:

- Records management including our attention to the declassification of records;
- Our Electronic Records Archives;
- The Presidential Libraries;
- Our Regional Records Centers;
- Civic Literacy;
- The Center for Legislative Archives; and
- The National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Records Management and Declassification

In NARA's Strategic Directions for Federal Records Management, we state that NARA will partner with stakeholders to ensure that:

- Federal agencies can economically and effectively create and manage records necessary to meet business needs
- Records are kept long enough to protect rights and assure accountability, and
- Records of archival value are preserved and made available for future generations

These high-level goals still guide our activities – and how we work with Federal agencies – to ensure effective records management across the Federal government.

On a more basic level, NARA carries out its statutory authorities by approving disposition authorities for Federal agencies, issuing regulations and guidance, and providing training to aid Federal agencies in establishing and maintaining effective records management programs.

In 2006, we established a Federal Records Council, a 27-member interagency committee to work with NARA to identify strategies, best practices, and solutions to electronic records and records management issues. This group is helping us identify and understand the best ways to integrate records management into agency business processes, which are increasingly driven by information technology, so the National Archives will have a historical record of the Federal government's activities in the 21st century and beyond.

However, we still face problems with processing archival records and declassification. NARA's holdings of traditional records have nearly doubled in the last 10 years making it increasingly difficult to register receipt of new holdings and shelve them.

We have taken steps to deal with a tremendous backlog of textual records that have not been fully processed—some one million cubic feet of documents of all kinds. These

documents have not yet been described well enough to enable efficient access to them. We are seeking to describe all records series to the appropriate level to ensure the description is adequate for access by professionals and others who do research here at the National Archives. We have assigned dozens of staff members to work on this processing initiative full time, and we are making steady progress.

Declassifying documents and returning them to the open shelves, has been a special concern.

Executive Order 12958, as amended, set December 31, 2006, as the deadline for automatic declassification of classified records more than 25 years old. Since the order went into effect in 1995, more than 460 million pages of Federal records have been declassified and released at NARA, with about 400 million pages to go as of the deadline date.

In the last year, the Presidential libraries met the mandate of Executive Order 12958, as amended, by referring all remaining 25-year-old classified Presidential documents for agency review and decision. The way in which the libraries achieved this was primarily through the Remote Archives Capture (RAC) Project¹. To date, the libraries from Truman through Carter have scanned 3,645,308 pages. We expect by this summer that nearly 1 million pages will have been returned to the Libraries. The libraries also continue to make progress on declassification through the systematic and mandatory declassification review processes. However, good news usually comes with a little bad news, which is that there is a backlog of moving the declassified items back into the open environment.

We are working with the Presidential Libraries and CIA to make this process more efficient. For example, at the Carter Library, we have been able to make the returned

¹ The Remote Archives Capture (RAC) Project is a collaborative program to implement the automatic declassification provisions of EO 12958, as amended, to 25-year-old classified holdings in the Presidential Libraries. The program has been a coordinated project among the Presidential Libraries, the CIA and other classifying agencies. Classified Presidential materials at field locations are electronically scanned and brought to Washington where they are reviewed by equity-holding agencies in a centralized location.

declassified and processed records available electronically though these electronically available records are outside the context of their textual files. We appreciate that researchers want access to these files as soon as possible, so we will work, to continue to improve efficiency by developing better processes and studying the further use of electronic systems at each Presidential Library.

With RAC systems, such as the one at the Carter Library, declassified records will still require review for non-classified restrictions, such as personal identifiers or detailed information on how the Secret Service protects of the President, but using an electronic system could expedite the process. This combined with other process improvements could allow faster public access to historical materials, while safeguarding sensitive information. Seven to 8 million pages of records from the Reagan Library will be the next set of pages that will be reviewed and declassified. .

To speed the declassification process for federal records NARA established an interagency referral center in 2005, and since then staff has concentrated on preparing records for review by their originating agencies. Now, with agencies returning decisions, staff is beginning to process records for release in the open shelves.

Among the first records to be released are State Department records on Central America and Army records on the Vietnam War.

The declassification issue, however, has a larger dimension. Last year, I announced the launch of a National Declassification Initiative, or NDI, to build on the success of our referral center. The purpose of the NDI is to coordinate more closely the declassification activities of the Federal Government and use the most efficient declassification process to improve the quality of the reviews and release the maximum amount of information in the shortest possible time.

In the past, resolving referrals required a large investment of both time and resources. Records had to be sent, either physically or electronically, to the agency, and then the

agency had to review the records, resolve any questions that arose, and report their decisions. However, the NDI has streamlined this process for all involved.

Now, agency representatives come to the Archives and examine documents with NARA staff. If another agency needs to review a document for equities, the representative of that agency is also involved so that questions and concerns can be settled quickly. This face-to-face process has been one of the keys to the NDI's success so far, as it serves to preclude redundancies in review by having every agency with an equity review the same group of records at the same time rather than having time consuming "serial referrals."

Second, the NDI established a quality assurance team to perform quality assurance review on the initial review of documents conducted by agencies. By doing this, we ensure that material that should be made public is released, and material that needs to remain classified, for national security reasons, is not released. In addition, this review helps to avoid situations where agencies unnecessarily refer material to other agencies, slowing down the declassification process, or fail to release information that does not require continued classification.

Looking to the future, we advocate the development of systems that integrate records management, information security, and declassification within agencies. Our partners, the Information Security Oversight Office and the Federal agencies who classify records, recognize the increasing complexity of managing and declassifying these records, and that the challenges will only increase in a rich electronic information and electronic record environment. An integrated approach will give us the tools to better manage those complexities.

Partnerships

Providing wider access to the billions of pages of textual records already in the National Archives nationwide is another challenge that we are attempting to meet through several digitization projects.

We have established several major partnerships with private entities. In 2006, we announced a partnership between the Kennedy Library and the EMC Corporation of suburban Boston to digitize the entire collection of papers, documents, photographs, and audio recordings of President Kennedy.

We also entered into an agreement with Google for a pilot program to make some of the National Archives' audiovisual holdings available online. Today, you can go to the Google site and see a collection of NARA's rare and historical films.

More recently, we entered into a partnership with Footnote.com, to digitize millions of records. Footnote is a subscription-based internet service that features searchable original documents. So far, Footnote has digitized more than 33 million pages that are now available on its web site.

In addition, we recently entered into a partnership with the Genealogical Society of Utah to digitize Civil War pension files.

Although each partnership is unique, we have crafted a digitization strategy that incorporates basic principles for all partnership projects which ensure:

- The safety and accessibility of original records during the digitization process;
- Partnerships are non-exclusive, and all of them require free public access to the online images in all of NARA's research rooms nationwide;
- All of the agreements give NARA unrestricted ownership to the data and images after an agreed-upon period of time; and
- Draft partnership agreements are posted for public comment to ensure transparency and to get public input before NARA commits to the partnership.

We are looking for additional partnerships to help us meet our goal of increased public access to our holdings. We are also working to develop our own capability to digitize and make available—electronically via the Internet—collections of paper and audiovisual records that are especially fragile or valuable.

Electronic Records Archives

One of the greatest challenges to the National Archives is the rapidly growing number of electronic records being created by the Federal Government. These records include text documents, e-mails, web pages, digital images, videotapes, maps, spreadsheets, presentations, databases, satellite images, geographic information systems—and more types of records to be created in the future.

Unlike parchment or paper, electronic records can become inaccessible quite easily—as time passes and technology advances. The hardware and software used to create these records can become obsolete very quickly, within years or months. This leaves countless important records at risk of being lost forever, but the good news is that the technology for *preserving* electronic records is finally catching up with the technology for *creating* them.

The first phase of our Electronic Records Archives, or ERA, will become operational in June of this year. The mission of ERA is clear and simple: it will authenticate, preserve, and make accessible—far into the future—the important electronic records of the Federal Government, regardless of the type of hardware or software used to create them or the kind available in the future. The ERA Program is proceeding on two developmental tracks: the Increment 1 (ERA Base) and Increment 2, Executive Office of the President (ERA EOP). The ERA Base Initial Operating Capability (IOC) will provide basic electronic records management capability for NARA legacy data and records and for current transactions of other Federal agencies. IOC for the ERA Base is scheduled for the end of June 2008. The ERA EOP will provide rapid ingest, search and retrieval capabilities for the Presidential records of the George W. Bush Administration, which will be transferred to NARA on January 20, 2009.

One of the first major tasks faced by ERA will occur on January 20, 2009 when the National Archives takes custody of the records of the Bush Administration. Millions of electronic text documents, digital photographs, and emails will be among that record. If

the past is prologue, the first request for access to those electronic records will also come on January 20, 2009. ERA will ensure that we are prepared to meet those requests.

ERA will be built to be able to respond to advances in information technology. ERA will accept new types of electronic records, and Federal departments and agencies can use the latest technologies in their daily record keeping, knowing that those records can be easily accepted by ERA.

Presidential Libraries and Museums

The Presidential Library system formally began in 1939, when President Franklin Roosevelt donated his personal and Presidential papers to the Federal Government. At the same time, Roosevelt pledged part of his estate at Hyde Park to the United States, and friends of the President formed a non-profit corporation to raise funds for the construction of the library and museum building.

Roosevelt's decision stemmed from a firm belief that Presidential papers are an important part of the national heritage and should be accessible to the public. He asked the National Archives to take custody of his papers and other historical materials and to administer his library.

Before the advent of the Presidential Library system, Presidents or their heirs often dispersed Presidential papers at the end of the administration. Though many pre-Hoover collections now reside in the Library of Congress, others are split among other libraries, historical societies, and private collections. Sadly, many materials have been lost or deliberately destroyed.

Today, the National Archives manages twelve Presidential Libraries from President Hoover to President Clinton. Recently, President Bush announced that his library would be located at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. The National Archives is already working on the Bush Library. Last year, we hired four archivists and a museum

registrar to begin the planning for Library. This year, we are hard at work planning the logistics of moving millions of pages of documents, electronic records, and artifacts from Washington DC to a temporary facility in Dallas. There, our staff will begin documenting and processing the records in preparation for transfer to the presidential library when it is completed. Our FY2009 budget proposal requests 24 positions for this work.

The enactment of the Presidential Records Act in 1978 gave ownership of presidential records to the American people and made them available to FOIA requests 5 years after the President leaves office. The archival processing of these FOIA requests requires searches through textual and electronic files, the retrieval of responsive files and documents, and page-by-page or message-by-message review for statutory and privacy restrictions. The PRA Libraries -- Reagan, Bush 41, and Clinton -- have substantial backlogs of FOIA requests. We have worked to streamline these processes, but identifying, retrieving, and reviewing files still takes much human effort. The FY 2009 Budget requests 15 positions for additional archivists in these libraries to address the backlog and get to our requestors the documents they need.

The Presidential libraries also continue to collaborate on public programming and conferences and to expand their national presence in education and outreach. Last November, they jointly sponsored a two-day symposium on the Presidency and the Supreme Court, held at the Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, NY. The keynote speaker was former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, and other speakers included academic experts on the court and the Presidency, media representatives who cover the court, and former White House counsels. This event followed the successful symposium on the Vietnam War at the Kennedy Library in early 2006. The Presidential Libraries are planning their next joint conference on Energy to take place in 2009.

Regional Records Centers and Archives

For almost 60 years, the National Archives and Records Administration has provided comprehensive records management services to the Federal government. Since the first Records Center opened in 1950, NARA's Federal Records Center Program has grown into a national network of 18 facilities storing 26 million cubic feet of records. Records Center facilities, located from coast to coast, provide secure storage and ready access to non-current records of Federal agencies and District Courts.

In 1999, the Records Center system converted to a reimbursable program that has provided the Federal community with exceptional service on a fully fee-for-service basis. Our Federal Records Center Program has had eight profitable years operating as a reimbursable business within the Federal government.

Records Centers are an efficient, essential means to protect Federal records needed for administrative, legal, fiscal, and, sometimes, historical purposes. Over the past three years, as part of a nationwide effort to meet modern facility standards, NARA has opened new records centers to replace aging facilities in Georgia, California, and Texas. In the next three years, we plan to open new facilities in Colorado, Illinois, and Missouri. In addition to housing paper records, our Records Centers store electronic media, and help agencies convert paper to digital media.

The national Military Personnel Records Center (MPRC) in St. Louis is one of the National Archives' largest operations. It is a central repository of 100 million military personnel and medical records of veterans since the beginning of the twentieth century. (Earlier military personnel records are in Washington, DC.) MPRC staff respond to over a million requests a year – 5,000 per work day – mostly from veterans and their families needing information to qualify for benefits and entitlements. It is not uncommon for the Center to receive an urgent phone call from a doctor with an immediate need for a medical record, or from a family needing proof of military service to bury a loved one. Our staff are on call 24/7 to answer such emergency requests.

Older military personnel records, typically those of WWII and earlier veterans, are increasingly sought for genealogical and historical purposes. To meet this research need, NARA and the Department of Defense reached an agreement in 2004, for the National Archives to acquire legal custody and responsibility for records, 62 years after a veteran's death or separation from service. As a result, the National Archives will assure that our veterans' records are preserved and accessible to future generations of Americans.

In addition to the nationwide Records Center system, NARA has fourteen Regional Archives throughout the country. The Regional Archives are one means to extend public access to our expert services and programs for researchers, educators, students, or anyone else with an interest or need to use or know about our government's records and our nation's history. Of course, another important way we extend access to our programs and services is through our Web site.

Most Regional Archives are co-located with a Records Center. In 2005, NARA opened a new Southeast Regional Archives in suburban Atlanta. Next year we will open a new Central Plains Regional Archives in Kansas City. These two facilities replace old, deteriorating facilities. Currently, NARA is undertaking a comprehensive analysis of the future role of the Regional Archives system. We expect to complete this analysis by the end of the fiscal year.

Civic Literacy

At this time of year, approximately 5000 people pass through the National Archives each day. Many are high school and junior high school students who wait noisily and impatiently to get to the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom. But as the teenagers climb the marble stairs of the Rotunda to see the Charters, they become suddenly solemn, as they discover what thousands of visitors to the National Archives do each year – that the freedom declared in writing more than 230 years ago, i.e., the government foundations

laid out by the first Americans, and the rights ensured to all citizens – are still relevant today

At the National Archives, simply giving access to our holdings is not enough. We are committed to providing opportunities for the public to see, use, and learn from the records of our government and in doing so develop a greater understanding of the history, culture, values, and ideas that have shaped our nation. It is vital that the raw documentary facts we process, preserve, and store—10 billion pieces of paper and, in the future, many terabytes of electronic records—have meaning for the American people to whom they belong.

In Washington, D.C., our Learning Center is now fully open, focusing on NARA's efforts to help teachers make the study of history, civics, and social studies more engaging, interesting, and important for students through the use of primary documents. The Presidential Libraries and Regional Record Centers conduct similar programs for students and teachers. For nearly 30 years, NARA has conducted the “Primarily Teaching” summer institutes at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC. The goal of the program is to teach teachers how to conduct research in our holdings so they can creatively integrate historical documents into classroom instruction.

Other longstanding education activities and partnerships include our involvement in National History Day—at the local, state, and national levels—and in “Teaching American History” grant projects funded by the Department of Education, in which staff in Washington, at many of the Presidential Libraries, and at regional archives around the country all participate. The Presidential Timeline, in which all Presidential Libraries participate, provides resources for teachers and students. Our new Digital Vaults web site recently has been nominated for a Webby, the leading international award honoring excellence on the Internet,

Taking our civic literacy efforts directly into homes, we have collaborated with the “Mini Page,” which is syndicated in more than 400 newspapers around the world and reaches

millions of children and their families. At any given time, hundreds of NARA staff members are serving as teachers and consultants, writers and editors, archival scholars, and museum curators in public programs aimed at engaging Americans in the study of their own history through written records that document that history.

Center for Legislative Archives

The Center for Legislative Archives preserves and makes available to researchers the historical records of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. The Center reports on its programs and activities, as you know, to the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress, co-chaired by the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House. Through its public outreach programs, the Center uses these historical records to promote a better understanding of Congress and the history of American representative government.

The Center is actively involved in the development of content for the exhibitions featured in the Capitol Visitor Center. Many of the extraordinary treasures from House and Senate records, currently stored in the Legislative Treasure vault, will be on display for the American people to see when they visit the Capitol. In essence, these landmark documents are returning home to the Capitol, where they first originated when the House and Senate created them doing the people's and the nation's business. In concert with the CVC's opening later this year, the Center will also be distributing its educational publication on the history of Congress to high school classrooms.

With a budget of \$2,000,000 and a staff of 17 full-time and 3 part-time employees, the Center for Legislative Archives houses the institutional records of the House and Senate from the First Congress to the present—totaling one-half billion pages documenting the history of representative government in America. The Center delivers over a million pages of records annually to support the current conduct of Congressional business. The Center is devoting significant resources to the processing of the records of the 9-11

Commission. During FY 2009, the Center will make those records available to the public, as mandated by the Congress and the Commission.

The Center also provides on-site reference assistance to researchers ranging from Congressional scholars and historians to attorneys looking for legislative intent and genealogists searching for individual petitions and claims. In the research room, the Center maintains published source material on Congress including the Journals of the House and Senate, the Congressional Record (and its predecessors the Globe and the Annals of Congress), Guide to the U.S. Serial Set, CIS Indexes, as well as other works on the history of Congress.

The Center has an increased challenge as Congress moves from paper to electronic preservation of its materials. It recently acquired over 900 DVDs of Senate Hearings from the 108th Congress. These discs, which are not reliable for long-term preservation, are the only copies of these hearings. Like the rest of the National Archives, the Center will take on one more challenge of managing fragile electronic records by creating the ways and means to provide for the permanent storage and continued access to these important records documenting the history of Congress. These discs represent the beginning of a sea change in how Congress creates and preserves its records.

With the assistance of the Senate and House Archivists, the Center is meeting with committee staff and information technology specialists in the Senate and House to conduct a survey of electronic record-keeping systems and practices. The results of that survey will help the National Archives prepare to meet the unique needs and requirements of the Senate and House as we move forward with the development of ERA.

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission

Congress established the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) in 1934. It supports a wide range of activities to preserve, publish, and encourage the use of documentary sources, created in every medium ranging from quill pen to computer, relating to the history of the United States. The Commission is a 15-member body, chaired by the Archivist of the United States and includes representatives of the three branches of the Federal Government. In addition, the Commission includes representatives of professional associations of archivists, historians, documentary editors, and records administrators.

Since it received grant-making authority in 1964, the NHPRC has awarded \$169 million to 4,200 projects involving records held by state and local governments, colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, and private collections. The Administration, however, is not seeking funding for this program in 2009, and instead is focusing on management changes in 2008 to improve performance.

I will now end with a story told by President Eisenhower: A government worker arrived in Washington in 1953, and as his taxi passed by the National Archives Building, he saw carved on one of its pedestals "What is Past is Prologue." He asked the taxi driver what the motto meant, and the reply was "Oh. That. That's bureaucratic talk. What it really means is 'you ain't seen nothin' yet.'"