



National Archives and Records Administration

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NARA Seeks Input into the Development of Alternative Models for Presidential Libraries

Background

The Presidential Historical Records Preservation Act of 2008 contains several provisions related to the the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and additional provisions related to Presidential libraries and the system for archiving Presidential records.

Provisions of the Act Related to Presidential Libraries

The 2008 Act increased the amount of money that the former President's foundation, which is responsible for constructing a Presidential library, must transfer to the government to be used for an endowment. Funds derived from the endowment are used to offset the annual cost of operating and maintaining the Presidential library. The Act raised the endowment to 60 percent of the cost of the library, and takes effect for libraries built after that of President George W. Bush. The foundations that built the first Bush Library and the Clinton Library provided endowments of 20 percent of the cost of the library, as will the foundation building the George W. Bush Library.

The Act also requires the Archivist to submit to Congress a report that provides alternative models for Presidential libraries that would "1) reduce the financial burden on the Federal Government, 2) improve the preservation of presidential records, and 3) reduce the delay in public access to all presidential records."

Suggestions for Alternative Models for Presidential Libraries

NARA seeks the comments and suggestions of interested organizations and individuals for cost effective ways of modifying the present system for archiving and providing public access to Presidential records. For example, a single centralized depository may have some benefits for research across administrations; however, the context provided by a richer collection of historical materials and artifacts of a single administration may be lost. In another possible alternative, museums could be funded and operated by private organizations, with the National Archives managing and providing access to the Presidential records in a nearby NARA-operated archival facility. This would reduce operating costs and provide the context for a richer collection of historical materials on the life and administration of individual Presidents. Interpretation, exhibits, and public programs would be managed by the private museum. In another model, digitizing entire collections, processing them electronically, and making them available via the Internet would eliminate the need for costly physical structures. Paper records and other media that need to be retained could be stored in lower-cost caves for long-term preservation. Other alternatives may involve changing how records are processed and made available. Presidential records can be processed more efficiently if they are processed systematically rather than under FOIA during the years in which the Presidential Records Act (PRA) restrictions apply (FOIA requests can be filed five years after the President leaves office and the PRA restrictions apply until 12 years after the President leaves office.)

We provide these examples to spur, not to constrain, your suggestions.

Helpful Links

The relevant laws related to Presidential libraries and records can be found in 44 U.S.C. § 2112 and §§ 2201-2207 respectively, per links listed below.

U.S.C. for Presidential Records

<http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usc.cgi?ACTION=BROWSE&TITLE=44USCC22>

U.S.C. for Presidential Archival Depositories (Libraries)

[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usc.cgi?ACTION=RETRIEVE&FILE=\\$\\$xa\\$\\$busc44.wais&start=540269&SIZE=24028&TYPE=TEXT](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/usc.cgi?ACTION=RETRIEVE&FILE=$$xa$$busc44.wais&start=540269&SIZE=24028&TYPE=TEXT) [Note that the U.S.C. has not yet been revised to reflect the increase in the endowment to 60 percent of the cost of the library.]

Presidential Historical Records Preservation Act of 2008

http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ404.110.pdf::

NARA will publish on its web site the final report as submitted to Congress.

NARA encourages comments by email to preslib-alternatives@nara.gov and requests they be submitted by April 17, 2009. Responses may also be mailed to:

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