



Public Access to Government Records and Information

Objective:

Through legislation, regulation, and adequate funding for the National Archives, ensure that the public has the greatest possible access to federal government records and information.

Background:

The National Coalition for History has successfully advocated for a number of records access issues in the past, including:

- The Presidential and Federal Records Act Amendments of 2014, which closed loopholes that allowed former presidents to keep certain records sealed indefinitely. Crucially, it also expanded the definition of a federal record to include electronic records, ensuring that they would also be retained and made accessible. It clarified that federal officials cannot use private email accounts to conduct official business, and that any records received or created on private accounts must be forwarded to an official account to ensure proper preservation.
- The FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, which strengthened the original Freedom of Information Act by limiting exemptions, creating an online request portal, and restoring a presumption of openness to the release of government records.

We continue to fight for improved records access by advocating for additional funding for the National Archives and Records Administration. NCH also supports expediting and simplifying the declassification process.

Why it matters:

Improved access to government records is necessary to promote accountability, create an informed citizenry, and enable historians to conduct effective research.