

SAA Calls for Further Consideration of Policy Changes for Operation of George W. Bush Presidential Library

In early June, news broke that the George W. Bush Foundation had entered into an agreement to assume sole control of the museum operations of the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum (Bush Library), located on the campus of Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. Per the agreement, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) would continue to administer the archival operations of the institution, including preservation of and access to records held in the facility. With an imminent congressional deadline looming for the House and the Senate to accept this agreement and move forward with this shift in the administration of Bush Library Museum operations, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) believes that all parties to the agreement would benefit from an exceptionally deliberate approach to this matter.

Considering the recent retirement of the Archivist of the United States and NARA's current state of administrative flux, a pause in the process will allow NARA staff and administration, particularly those in the Bush Library and the Office of Presidential Libraries, the opportunity to thoughtfully implement any policy changes that will have long-standing and far-reaching consequences. Furthermore, by delaying the shift of authority over museum operations at the Bush Library, NARA and the Office of Presidential Libraries will be afforded the opportunity to consider additional input from interested stakeholders about this significant policy shift.

The presidential libraries and museums are among the most visited cultural heritage sites in the United States. SAA supports any opportunity to ensure that the archivists and experts who staff these facilities, particularly during a period of substantial change in the agency, can continue to offer the public the high-quality access and outreach services that visitors to the presidential libraries have come to expect.

[Link for the first sentence re "news broke"- <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/06/national-archives-george-bush-privatize-history/639429/>]