

ASSASSINATION RECORDS REVIEW BOARD (ARRB) FUNDING

The ARRB is a responsible, cost-effective and efficient agent for carrying out this Congressionally-mandated, one-time task.

- The ARRB is *already* a sunsetted agency, *by statute*. Under the JFK Assassination Records Collection Act (PL 102-526 and subsequent amendments), the ARRB will go out of existence on September 30, 1997. The ARRB is a small independent agency created by Congress to complete a specific and finite (though large) task. It is *not* a large bureaucracy intent on devouring tax dollars into the indefinite future.
- The ARRB is operating within its anticipated budget. During the past six months, the Board has established its office, purchased equipment, hired and trained its professional staff and obtained appropriate security clearances. The Board's start-up costs have been spent, and the Board is now equipped to focus exclusively on the review and release of JFK documents. The Board has reviewed, and voted to release, an initial round of assassination records within the last month, and henceforth looks forward to an accelerated schedule of releases.
- Transferring the ARRB's functions to NARA at this late date -- even if it were not inadvisable on other grounds -- is *not* cost-effective. NARA has no resources to undertake the highly-specialized task given to the ARRB under the Act. The time-lag associated with reallocating the Board's work to NARA would almost certainly push the completion of the core task past the existing sunset date for the ARRB. This course would end up costing taxpayers *more* money, not less.

When Congress passed the JFK Act on a bi-partisan basis in 1992, it chose *not* to assign the review function to the National Archives -- with good reason. The National Archives is not an appropriate vehicle for the task Congress created the ARRB to do.

- The legislative history makes clear that Congress placed great importance on devising a process for the review and release of JFK assassination documents that would both be and *be seen to be* independent. The National Archives, which plays its own important role in the process outlined in the JFK Act, has neither the independence nor the authority to carry out the Board's task. The National Archives is itself a custodian of numerous assassination-related records, including records of other agencies that have been accessioned by the Archives, records of the Archives itself, as well as donated records within the Presidential Library system. Since many of these records are closed to the public and therefore subject to review under the Act, the National Archives is not a disinterested party

and would face an insurmountable conflict of interest were it to be given the Board's mission.

- The ARRB is comprised of citizens specifically chosen for this task. Board members are not government employees; they are not tied to other government agencies. They are, by definition, more independent than any permanent federal employees could be. This independence is essential to the credibility of the review process. In passing the JFK Act, Congress understood that the document review process must be perceived to be independent. If it is not, a primary goal of the law will go unachieved, and too many Americans will continue to believe that their government is hiding the facts from the public. The ARRB meets the independence test in a way that the National Archives cannot.

In short, an ill-advised scuttling of the ARRB -- just as the Board is beginning to review and release documents -- will inevitably compound the very issues that gave rise to the JFK Act in the first place. A premature elimination of the Board, before its legislated sunset date and before its task is complete, will only feed the frenzy of mistrust over the government's handling of the assassination of President Kennedy.