

RELEASING THE RECORDS OF
THE HOUSE SELECT COMMIT-
TEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

HON. STEWART B. MCKINNEY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 13, 1983

• Mr. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 20th anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the 15th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. Today I am joining with four of my colleagues from the former House Select Committee on Assassinations (SCOA) to introduce a resolution that will write the final chapter in the lives of these two great men—the public release of the proceedings of that committee.

Nearly all proceedings of the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, better known as the Warren Commission, have been available for years to scholars, historians, journalists, and the interested public. The FBI has a separate reading room just for unclassified documents relating to the assassination of President Kennedy. Yet right across the hall from the Warren Commission documents, in the National Archives, the SCOA documents remain closed to the public, and for no reason.

By all accounts, the select committee sought full public disclosure of the facts relating to its investigations, but time and money constraints at the end of its tenure prevented the necessary review and release. Because the committee failed to act to open up its proceedings to the public, the records have been embargoed for 50 years in accordance with normal House rules. Our resolution would simply direct the

Clerk of the House to release those documents now.

The opening up of these important documents would serve two purposes: it would assist those with scholarly or personal interest in the lives of these two men; and it would allow the public to assess fairly the performance and conclusions of the Select Committee on Assassinations.

I would like to assure my colleagues that no sensitive material would be released under this resolution. It adopts the guidelines used by the National Archives for processing the Warren Commission's records. These guidelines prevent the release of information that:

Would be detrimental to enforcement of U.S. law;

Might reveal the identity of confidential sources or jeopardize future investigations; or

Might embarrass innocent individuals.

In addition, our resolution prohibits the release of records from any proceedings that the committee voted to keep secret or where confidentiality was guaranteed to a witness in executive session.

Even under these strict guidelines, over 90 percent of the Warren Commission documents have been released. Thousands of Americans have made use of this material, with no detriment to national security. I might add, Mr. Speaker, that passage of this important resolution will not cost the Government any additional money, as the National Archives already has archivists familiar with the topic from working with the Warren Commission records.

What this resolution comes down to is the public's right to know about the tragic deaths of two of our finest leaders and about the procedures of the House investigation. To keep the House records secret when nearly all of the Warren Commission documents have been released only contributes to public distrust of our activities.

I need hardly remind my colleagues that President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King were eloquent advocates of honest government and an educated citizenry. Our passing this resolution and releasing the Select Committee on Assassination records would be a most worthy testament to these two men after so many years. •

By Mr. MCKINNEY (for himself, Mr. EDGAR, Mr. SAWYER, Mr. FAURTAOY, and Mr. FORD of Tennessee):

H. Res. 150: Resolution to provide for the accelerated release of certain records of the Select Committee on Assassinations to the Committee on House Administration.

House Administration

(D 12; R 7)

Democrats

Augustus F. Hawkins, Calif., chairman

Frank Annunzio, Ill.

Joseph M. Gaydos, Pa.

Ed Jones, Tenn.

Joseph G. Minish, N.J.

Charlie Rose, N.C.

Al Swift, Wash.

William J. Coyne, Pa.

*Thomas S. Foley, Wash.

*Mary Rose Oaker, Ohio

*Tony Coelho, Calif.

*Jim Bates, Calif.

Republicans

Bill Frenzel, Minn.

William L. Dickinson, Ala.

Robert E. Bodham, Calif.

Newt Gingrich, Ga.

William M. Thomas, Calif.

Lynn Martin, Ill.

*Rod Chandler, Wash.

To provide for the accelerated release of certain records of the Select Committee
on Assassinations.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 13, 1983

Mr. MCKINNEY (for himself, Mr. EDGAR, Mr. SAWYER, Mr. FAUNTROY, and Mr.
FORD of Tennessee) submitted the following resolution; which was referred
to the Committee on House Administration

RESOLUTION

To provide for the accelerated release of certain records of the
Select Committee on Assassinations.

2

1 *Resolved*, That, notwithstanding the provisions of
2 House Resolution 288 of the 83d Congress, the Clerk of the
3 House is authorized and directed to permit the Administrator
4 of General Services to make available for public use, in ac-
5 cordance with this resolution, all records of the Select Com-
6 mittee on Assassinations of the 94th and 95th Congresses
7 other than records of proceedings the Select Committee on
8 Assassinations voted to keep secret or records with respect to
9 which the committee guaranteed confidentiality to a witness
10 in executive session.

1 SEC. 2. Except as provided by the first section of this
2 resolution, the guidelines governing disclosure of the records
3 of the Select Committee on Assassinations shall be the guide-
4 lines utilized by the General Services Administration for the
5 records of the President's Commission on the Assassination
6 of President Kennedy.

7 SEC. 3. It is the intent of the House that the General
8 Services Administration give priority to the review and re-
9 lease of these records.

STATEMENT REGARDING HOUSE RESOLUTION # 160 Hon. Robert W. Edgar
April 12, 1983

Mr. Speaker, it has been almost 20 years since the assassination
of President Kennedy and 15 years since the assassination of Dr. Martin
Luther King. I believe it would be an appropriate remembrance of their tragic
deaths if we would pass this resolution introduced here today.

The resolution makes the proceedings of the Select Committee on
Assassinations available to the public. This is an action which the Committee,
of which I was a member, intended to take but failed to carry out for lack of
time and money in the waning days of its existence.

We can affirm a policy of full disclosure of the proceedings in a manner
consistent with the protection of classified information and the protection of
innocent victims. The release of the Committee's work would be governed by
the guidelines used in making the Warren Commission documents available, and I
certainly believe the House proceedings are comparable documents.

The Warren Commission has released over 90% of its records and the FBI and
CIA have made thousands of pages available to the public in the interest of
an informed citizenry.

For Congress to stand alone in the withholding of its files can only
create an aura of mistrust and skepticism as to the thoroughness and
competency of the House investigation.

I state, as I believe President Kennedy and Dr. King would state were
they here today, that it is in the national interest to make the Assassination
Committee's proceedings, under responsible federal guidelines, available to
the public.