

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

May 24, 1983

RELEASING THE RECORDS OF THE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON ASSASSINATIONS

Dear Colleague:

Four years after the House Select Committee on Assassinations (SCOA) concluded its business, none of its records have been released to the public. As former members of that committee, we believe that this embargo denies the public's right to know. Accordingly, we have introduced H. Res. 160, authorizing the release of records pertaining to the committee's investigations into the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King.

Nearly all the 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 public. Yet right across the hall from the Warren Commission documents in the National Archives, the SCOA documents remain closed to the public. We think this reflects badly on our institution.

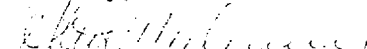
By all accounts, the Select Committee sought full public disclosure of the facts relating to its investigations, but time and money constraints at the end of its tenure prevented the necessary review and release. Because our committee failed to act to open up its proceedings to the public, the records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

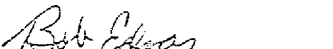
The opening up of these important documents would serve two purposes: it would assist those with scholarly or personal interest in the lives of these two men; and it would allow the public to assess fairly the performance and conclusions of the Select Committee on Assassinations.

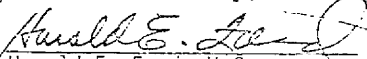
No sensitive material would be released under this resolution. It adopts the guidelines used by the National Archives for processing the Warren Commission records. These prevent the release of information that might: 1) be detrimental to the enforcement of U.S. law; 2) reveal the identity of confidential sources or jeopardize future investigations; or 3) 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.

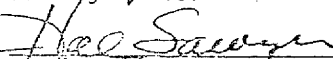
This year marks the 20th anniversary of the death of President Kennedy and the 15th anniversary of the death of Dr. King. The release of the SCOA documents would be a fitting testament to these two advocates of a well-informed citizenry. If you need further information or would like to cosponsor, please call Jonathan Propp at 5-5541.


Sincerely,


Stewart B. McKinney, M.C.


Bob Edgar, M.C.


Harold E. Ford, M.C.


Harold S. Sawyer, M.C.


Walter E. Fauntroy, M.C.