

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Disclosure of RFK Assassination Files to be Sought from
Los Angeles Police Commission Tuesday

LOS ANGELES, July 26 -- The public release of the most important official files concerning the 1968 assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy will be sought at a meeting of the Los Angeles Police Commission Tuesday afternoon. These files total over 50,000 pages, and contain at least 1700 photographs, reports, interviews, and other materials.

Only a small fraction of the Los Angeles Police files in the assassination have ever been publicly available, in contrast to massive disclosure in the case of similar national tragedies, such as the assassinations of President John Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The FBI has stated in a recent Freedom of Information Act action that release of investigative material from the RFK case "will benefit the general public." Likewise, the RFK Collection archivist at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, Dr. Henry Gwiazda, has noted in a letter to the Commission that the police files in this case "would have significant research value," and should be amenable to general archival standards and practices.

The Police Commission hearing on the matter is in response to requests for data on the case made in recent years by scholars and private citizens from around the country. It follows a brief appearance before the Commission in June by Dr. Philip Melanson, Professor of Political Science at Southeastern Massachusetts University, an expert on political violence, and a director of the Robert F. Kennedy Assassination Archive at his institution.

Other parties who have submitted informational requests to the Commission include Professor Gerald McKnight of Hood College in Maryland;

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Professor Lauriston R. King of Texas A and M; Gregory Stone, a political scientist and former aide of the late congressman Allard K. Lowenstein; and Robert J. Joling, past president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. Paul Schrade, a friend and campaign coordinator for Senator Kennedy, has indicated his support of responsible disclosure efforts.

In response to scholarly and other requests, substantial declassification of the RFK files of the Los Angeles District Attorney's office has taken place, and exhibits from the 1969 murder trial of Sirhan Sirhan have been made available at the Federal Archives and Records Center at Laguna Niguel, California. The FBI recently has begun the declassification of 28,000 pages of material on the case, with a waiver of normal Freedom of Information Act fees on the grounds of public interest.

Current petitioners agree that certain materials in the investigative files, such as autopsy photographs, sensitive personal information, or the names of confidential informants, should be appropriately restricted. They contend, however, that very significant data can be released with relative ease through normal and orderly archival procedures.

Several of the recent petitioners, including Dr. Melanson, will appear at the Police Commission meeting, to be held at 2:30 on Tuesday at Parker Center. Scholars and researchers have emphasized the value of these records to historical and evidentiary understanding and their importance in efforts to prevent the recurrence of tragedies such as the death of Senator Kennedy.

For further information:

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Among the persons who have requested to speak before the Commission are:

Philip H. Melanson, Professor of Political Science and Director, Robert F. Kennedy Assassination Archive, Southeastern Massachusetts University.

Gregory Stone, Political Scientist, researcher with past correspondence to the Commission.

Richard Weiss, Professor of History, U.C.L.A.

Morris Polan, University Librarian, Cal. St. U., L.A.

David Mendelsohn, Radio and TV producer.

Lawrence Teeter, Attorney and requestor to Commission.

Carol Moss, Attorney

Paul Schrade, Chair, Worker's Rights Committee, A.C.L.U.