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RFK Assassination File Release to Begin Amid Controversy

LOS ANGELES, March 3 -- In response to nationwide demands, the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners is expected to begin on Tuesday the first release of the police investigative file in the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

Historians, archivists and Kennedy supporters who originally petitioned the Commission to release the file criticized the fact that a mere three percent of the total material is being made public after months of delay. They also charged that the disclosure process to date has been closed to effective public dialogue.

Professor Philip Melanson, one of the original petitioners and a director of the Robert Kennedy Assassination Archive at Southeastern Massachusetts University, said, "The Commission's failure to expeditiously implement its commitment to release the total file is fast becoming a national disgrace in terms of public disclosure."

Several of the original petitioners for release of the file will be present at Tuesday's meeting of the Commission (2:30 p.m. at Parker Center) to urge an end to the 17-year withholding of these historically important materials.

Paul Schrade, vice-chairman of Senator Kennedy's campaign for the presidency, who was wounded in the shooting, said, "The Commission's stalling tactics are a clear suppression of the public's right to know and a violation of the California Public Records Act."

Others who have urged that the assassination files be made available include Professor Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Robert Kennedy's biographer and friend; Frank Mankiewicz, his former press secretary; Henry Gwiazda, the RFK archivist at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library; actor Martin Sheen; and numerous scholars and archivists in related academic fields. An August 13 resolution by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors urged the broadest possible disclosure of the files.

For further information:

David Mendelsohn - 213-666-6148

Paul Schrade - 213-656-5623

Paul Spindler - 213-203-0482

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