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Papers of the President

Become Public Property

United Press International

President Carter has signed legislation making presidential papers public property, ending a two-century tradition of giving outgoing chief executives control over their records, the White House announced yesterday.

The Presidential Records Act of 1978—one of 10 measures signed and three vetoed by Carter—was enacted in part in response to the controversy over ownership of Richard M. Nixon's records. It puts presidential papers in the public domain when a president leaves office and provides access to them under the Freedom of Information Act.

But that law also provides delays up to 12 years in releasing papers about sensitive cases—a move the White House demanded to make sure aides would be candid with a president on controversial issues.

Other bills signed by Carter provide for:

- Studying the possibility of turn-wartime veterans with nonservice disabilities.
- A 10-year acceleration in production of electricity from sunlight, intended to cut the cost of solar cells by underwriting their development and creating a larger market.