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RFK Assassination Disclosure Issues

From 1983 to March of 1985, numerous and detailed public inputs have been made concerning disclosure of the Robert F. Kennedy assassination materials of the Los Angeles Police Department. Many of these, including the formal proposal submitted to the Police Commission on February 12, 1986, remain directly relevant to current decisions. In the context of the work of the Mayor's advisory committee, some basic substantive points are noted below.

1.) Timetables for expeditious disclosure should be mandated in any repository arrangement. Phased release should take place with urgent priority placed on the most important and easily processed documents.

2.) Arbitrary limitations on financial support for the redaction process should not be made until it is determined that the access, quality and speed of disclosure will not thereby be compromised. Cost minimization is a desirable goal, but within the context of the full public and legal responsibilities which exist for timely and effective disclosure. (One way to minimize expense is to avoid needless editing and litigation costs.)

3.) The redaction standards applied to the LAPD summary report released in March depart in crucial respects from the requirements of effective disclosure and the practices employed in comparable cases. Effective standards must be insured in the current deliberations, to provide that the effectiveness of the

disclosure of the basic 50,000 page file is not fundamentally compromised.

4.) Inventory and filing guide materials, of importance to current decisions and in research planning, should be released as they are located and identified.

5.) A structure for administrative review, enlisting scholars or other impartial experts, should be provided for possible appeals of specific redaction decisions.

6.) Thousands of pages of original material from the Warren Commission and the House Select Committee on Assassinations have been published and made available for purchase. While publication itself is not essential to meaningful disclosure, the best feasible measures for inexpensive access or distribution of these materials should be provided.