

## President Signs Bill Requiring Disclosure of JFK Documents

*Post-Weiss*  
President Bush signed a bill Monday night requiring government-wide disclosure of documents relating to the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Bush, however, asserted the power to override the law and exercise what he said was his constitutional authority to keep secret "executive branch deliberations," "law enforcement information," and "national security information."

He said in a two-page statement released yesterday afternoon that he would do this only in "the most extraordinary circumstances," but he complained that the law gives him too little room to prevent disclosure.

"My authority to protect these categories of information comes from the Constitution and cannot be limited by statute," Bush said. "Although only the most extraordinary circumstances would require postponement of the disclosure of documents for reasons other than those recognized in the bill, I cannot abdicate my constitutional responsibility to take such action when necessary."

The law sets up a five-member review board with the power to obtain JFK assassination records from any government office, the CIA and FBI, and committees of Congress. The board can also hold hearings and subpoena witnesses or documents if necessary.

Review board members are to be appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. Nominations to the panel must be made in 90 days, or by Jan. 25, a few days after the inauguration.

Bush said that "because of legitimate historical interest in this tragic event, all documents about the assassination should be disclosed, except where the strongest possible reasons counsel otherwise."

He said that he had "constitutional" objections to several other provisions in the law, including requirements to consider suggestions from historical and legal organizations in making review board nominations and to submit them in 90 days.

Leonard Weiss, staff director for the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, said the bill was the product of extensive discussions with affected agencies.

"For the president, at the last second in signing the bill, to suddenly assert authority not in keeping with the letter or spirit of the bill, is to do violence to the legislative process," Weiss said.