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Calls mount for JFK disclosure

Warren Commission lawyers want files open

WASHINGTON (AP) — A dozen lawyers from the Warren Commission joined former President Ford on Thursday in calling for disclosure of CIA files and all other government records on the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

The lawyers, plus a former commission staff member, urged "the broadest possible accessibility" to evidence in the probe of Kennedy's death, which has been the focus of renewed attention since the release in December of the movie "JFK." The film suggests that elements of the government, particularly the Pentagon and the CIA, conspired to murder the president.

"I would like to deny to our critics that we are part and parcel of some kind of coverup," said former commission lawyer Howard Willens, one of the 12. All the commission lawyers who are still living endorsed the request, which was publicized in

news conferences in Los Angeles, Cleveland and Des Moines, Iowa, in addition to Washington.

Mr. Ford made a similar request in a letter last week to Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, who headed the House Assassinations Committee in the late 1970s. Mr. Ford's letter also went to House Speaker Thomas Foley, D-Wash.

"I would ... urge that all materials in the CIA pertaining to the investigation ... should be made available to the public," said Mr. Ford's letter.

Mr. Ford and the 13 want disclosure of the few Warren Commission records that remain sealed, plus release of 400 cubic feet of closed records from the House panels' probe.

The Warren Commission concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald acted

alone in killing the president. The House panel concluded that Kennedy probably was assassinated as the result of a conspiracy, although it was unable to identify another gunman or the extent of any such conspiracy.

The House committee based its findings on acoustical evidence suggesting that a fourth shot had been fired at Kennedy from a grassy knoll. Mr. Ford urged the National Research Council to appoint a panel of scientists to review the acoustical evidence.

"Americans are entitled to know the truth," Mr. Ford wrote.

Among the 12 Warren Commission lawyers was David Belin, a former executive director of the Rockefeller Commission, which in 1975 investigated allegations of unlawful CIA

activities in the United States. While on the commission, Mr. Belin uncovered CIA assassination plots against Cuban leader Fidel Castro. Later, the CIA rejected his request for all agency investigative records involving the Kennedy slaying.

"It's an example of excessive secrecy of our government," Mr. Belin told a news conference in Des Moines on Thursday. "It contributes to the decline of trust."

Mr. Belin and ex-commission lawyer Wesley J. Liebeler blasted Oliver Stone's movie "JFK."

"I believe today we are experiencing a rebirth of McCarthyism in the false claims that the CIA and Lyndon Johnson were involved in the assassination or the coverup," Mr. Belin said in a telephone interview.