

Panel Supports Bill To Make President's Papers U.S. Property

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A House subcommittee adopted legislation yesterday declaring that White House records are federal property but giving a president the right to keep some material sealed for 10 years after leaving office.

A president's official records are now regarded as his own property.

The move to change the law developed when President Nixon resigned in August 1974. Nixon initially worked out an agreement giving himself control over his papers, but Congress approved a law making his White House documents government property and turning them over to the General Services Administration.

The proposal adopted by the Government Operations subcommittee would require an outgoing president, beginning with the one elected in 1980, to turn over all official White House records to the National Archives.

His authority to restrict access for 10 years would apply to classified documents or material involving national defense, foreign policy, appointments, trade secrets, advice from aides, and personnel and medical files.

Private records, such as diaries or journals, would remain the property of a former president.

President Carter has pledged to turn his papers over to the government when he leaves office. In a letter to the subcommittee however, presidential counsel Robert Lipshutz and special assistant Hugh Carter Jr., said Carter wants to be exempted from the measure, should he be elected to a second term. They also said a president should be permitted to restrict access to documents for 15 years.