

The Latest on Nixon Tapes

Washington

The General Services Administration proposed yesterday that groups of former President Nixon's tapes be made public at listening centers across the nation — but probably not before 1977.

The GSA also suggested giving top priority to sorting and making public those Nixon presidential materials that may relate to abuses of power.

The proposals were contained in a massive report to Congress, which last December instructed the GSA to submit a plan by March 19

for its processing of the Nixon presidential materials. The GSA plans become effective in 90 days unless either house of Congress vetoes them.

The GSA may not begin processing the materials until final settlement of Mr. Nixon's suits challenging constitutionality of the law and the government's claim of ownership of the materials.

The suits undoubtedly will be appealed to the Supreme Court, with a final ruling not expected for about 18 months.

"We estimate that soon after the start of the processing, some of the most sensitive and well-known 'Watergate' materials can be made available to the public and that virtually all of the 'Watergate' materials can be made available to the public within three years from the start of processing," GSA administrator Arthur F. Sampson said.

"We will establish locations around the country where copies of the most sensitive material of all — the White House tapes — can be heard by the public," the GSA said.

The report estimated that the first group of tapes would be made available in the spring of 1977. Groups of tapes would be made available to the public as the process and review were completed, with the completion of the task by the fall of 1979.

Sampson said there are 42 million pages of Nixon papers, 880 tapes, 6000 video tapes, 1.2 million feet of motion pictures, 435,000 photographs, 15,000 books, 25,000 museum objects — 35,000 cubic feet in all.

He proposed that a staff of 100 persons — including 41 working on the papers and 40 on the tapes — do the processing over a three-year period at a cost of \$7 million.

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