

# 15-Year Secrecy Limit Urged for Public Papers

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When Richard Nixon left office, he tried to take 42 million papers generated while he was in the White House.

Now Congress is being urged to make such papers public 15 years after a President departs.

The recommendation for a law to end the custom of high officials taking their papers with them comes from the Public Documents Commission, a panel of government officials, members of Congress and historians.

The commission was created by Congress in the uproar over Nixon's attempt to keep the papers and his White House tapes.

In a report filed last week, it said not only presidential documents but also papers generated by members of Congress, federal judges and their staffs should be turned over to the National Archivist and made available to public scrutiny within 15 years.

Historians would gain a new source of insight, but the information would be stale before a President's enemies could convert it into political ammunition.

The same law that created the commission blocked Nixon from taking possession of documents generated in his White House. Lower courts have upheld the law and the Supreme Court is expected to rule soon on Nixon's challenge to it.

It debating the issue, the commission split angrily at times, with two members wanting to make such documents available immediately.

Commission Chairman Herbert Brownell, who served as Attorney General in the Eisenhower administration, and Sen. Lowell P. Weicker, (R-Conn.) refused to sign the report.

Instead, they proposed making the Freedom of Information Act apply to all papers except personal documents such as diaries, or military and foreign policy secrets.

Brownell was supported by the commission's legal staff, headed by J. Lee Rankin, his former solicitor general. So bitter was the dispute the legal staff moved out of the commission's offices and was unavailable to the rest of the panel, members said.

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