

Calls and Letters Needed for the Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2007

UPDATE: [As of January 25, 2008]

On January 22, the "Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2007" ([H.R. 1255](#); [S. 886](#)) was [held up in the Senate](#) by Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL). That night, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) brought [H.R. 1255](#) to the floor under Unanimous Consent, which would have allowed the bill to quickly move through the Senate. Sen. Sessions objected without explanation. If you live in Alabama, we need to you to ask Sen. Sessions to lift his hold! See below for more information, including a sample letter.

BACKGROUND:

Legislation currently [held up in the Senate](#) would restore standards for the timely release of Presidential records and nullify the [Executive Order](#) President Bush issued in 2001. The Bush E.O. gave current and former presidents and vice presidents broad authority to withhold presidential records. The "Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2007" ([H.R. 1255](#); [S. 886](#)) would reverse the Bush E.O. by establishing a deadline for the review of records, limiting the authority of former presidents to withhold records, requiring the president to make privilege claims personally, and eliminating the ability for Vice Presidents to assert executive privilege claims over vice presidential records. You can read more about the Presidential Records Act in our [Issue Brief](#).

TAKE ACTION!

There are two things you can do to help this bill move through the Senate:

1. If your Senator is **not** a [co-sponsor](#), send him or her an [email](#) to request he or she consider co-sponsoring. The bill cleared the [Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs](#) (HSGA) this summer, but it is stalled in the Senate and Committee members need to hear from you. Only Committee Members Lieberman, Obama, and Sununu have signed on to co-sponsor. See a sample letter below (Sample Letter 1, page 2). In addition, if your Senator is already a co-sponsor, send him or her a thank you note!
2. If you live in Alabama, write to Sen. Sessions to ask him to lift his hold. See a sample letter below (Sample Letter 2, page 3).

If you prefer to call your Senator, may use the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 to call your Senator's office. Tell the staffer you are a constituent, and either ask that your Senator sign on to co-sponsor the "Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2007" or thank your Senator for co-sponsoring.

If you hear back from your Senator, please let us know! You may send a copy of his or her response or just send a note to Emily Feldman, ejf33@law.georgetown.edu

SAMPLE LETTER 1: ASK YOUR SENATOR TO CO-SPONSOR

On behalf of _____, I am writing to ask you to co-sponsor the "Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2007" ([S. 886](#)) which would re-establish procedures to ensure the timely release of presidential records that Congress intended with the Presidential Records Act of 1978.

The "Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2007" ([H.R. 1255](#); [S. 886](#)) would reverse the Bush E.O. by establishing a deadline for the review of records, limiting the authority of former presidents to withhold records, requiring the president to make privilege claims personally, and eliminating the ability for Vice Presidents to assert executive privilege claims over vice presidential records. The Act addresses issues central to AALL's core values— specifically, our commitment to transparency in government, openness and accountability— which are crucial for democracy. In this case, presidential records facilitate important historical research, foster government accountability by the public, and provide access to important textual records necessary for a stable and civil society.

The bill has broad bipartisan support in the Senate, and it cleared the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee by voice vote earlier this year. Please considering co-sponsoring S. 886.

Sincerely,
[ADD SIGNATURE]

Members of the HSGA Committee who are already Co-Sponsors:

[Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman](#) [CT] (Co-Sponsor)
[Sen. Barack Obama](#) [IL] (Co-Sponsor)
[Sen. John E. Sununu](#) [NH] (Co-Sponsor)

Members of the HSGA Committee who have not signed on:

[Susan M. Collins](#) *Ranking Member* [ME]
[Carl Levin](#) [MI]
[Ted Stevens](#) [AK]
[Daniel K. Akaka](#) [HI]
[George V. Voinovich](#) [OH]
[Thomas R. Carper](#) [DE]
[Norm Coleman](#) [MN]
[Mark L. Pryor](#) [AR]
[Tom Coburn](#) [OK]
[Mary L. Landrieu](#) [LA]
[Pete V. Domenici](#) [NM]
[John Warner](#) [VA]
[Claire McCaskill](#) [MO]
[Jon Tester](#) [MT]

Co-Sponsors of S. 886 (send them a thank you note!)

Sponsor: [Sen. Jeff Bingaman](#) [NM]
[Sen. John Cornyn](#) [TX]
[Sen. Dianne Feinstein](#) [CA]
[Sen. Patrick J. Leahy](#) [VT]
[Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman](#) [CT] (Chairman of HSGA)
[Sen. Barack Obama](#) [IL] (Member of HSGA)
[Sen. John E. Sununu](#) [NH] (Member of HSGA)

SAMPLE LETTER 2: TO SEN. SESSIONS FROM ALABAMA RESIDENTS

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
335 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-0104

Dear Senator Sessions:

As a member of the American Association of Law Libraries and an Alabama resident, I am writing to ask you to lift your hold on the "Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2007" ([H.R. 1255](#)).

The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) is a non-profit educational organization whose mission is to promote and enhance the value of law libraries to the legal and public communities, to foster the profession of law librarianship, and to provide leadership in the field of legal information and information policy.

The "Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2007" (H.R. 1255; [S. 886](#)) would reverse President Bush's Executive Order 13233 by establishing a deadline for the review of records, limiting the authority of former presidents to withhold records, requiring the president to make privilege claims personally, and eliminating the ability for Vice Presidents to assert executive privilege claims over vice presidential records. The Act addresses issues central to AALL's core values— specifically, our commitment to transparency in government, openness and accountability— which are crucial for democracy. In this case, presidential records facilitate important historical research, foster government accountability by the public, and provide access to important textual records necessary for a stable and civil society.

The bill has broad bipartisan support in the Senate, and it cleared the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee by voice vote earlier this year. I strongly support The Presidential Records Act Amendments of 2007 and request that you lift your hold on the bill.

Sincerely,

[ADD SIGNATURE]