

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 35

To amend chapter 22 of title 44, United States Code, popularly known as the Presidential Records Act, to establish procedures for the consideration of claims of constitutionally based privilege against disclosure of Presidential records.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 6, 2009

Mr. TOWNS (for himself, Mr. ISSA, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. BURTON of Indiana, Mr. CLAY, and Mr. SHERMAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

A BILL

To amend chapter 22 of title 44, United States Code, popularly known as the Presidential Records Act, to establish procedures for the consideration of claims of constitutionally based privilege against disclosure of Presidential records.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Presidential Records
5 Act Amendments of 2009”.

1 **SEC. 2. PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERATION OF CLAIMS OF**
2 **CONSTITUTIONALLY BASED PRIVILEGE**
3 **AGAINST DISCLOSURE.**

4 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 22 of title 44, United
5 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
6 lowing:

7 **“§ 2208. Claims of constitutionally based privilege**
8 **against disclosure**

9 “(a)(1) When the Archivist determines under this
10 chapter to make available to the public any Presidential
11 record that has not previously been made available to the
12 public, the Archivist shall—

13 “(A) promptly provide notice of such deter-
14 mination to—

15 “(i) the former President during whose
16 term of office the record was created; and

17 “(ii) the incumbent President; and

18 “(B) make the notice available to the public.

19 “(2) The notice under paragraph (1)—

20 “(A) shall be in writing; and

21 “(B) shall include such information as may be
22 prescribed in regulations issued by the Archivist.

23 “(3)(A) Upon the expiration of the 20-day period (ex-
24 cepting Saturdays, Sundays, and legal public holidays) be-
25 ginning on the date the Archivist provides notice under
26 paragraph (1)(A), the Archivist shall make available to the

1 public the record covered by the notice, except any record
2 (or reasonably segregable part of a record) with respect
3 to which the Archivist receives from a former President
4 or the incumbent President notification of a claim of con-
5 stitutionally based privilege against disclosure under sub-
6 section (b).

7 “(B) A former President or the incumbent President
8 may extend the period under subparagraph (A) once for
9 not more than 20 additional days (excepting Saturdays,
10 Sundays, and legal public holidays) by filing with the Ar-
11 chivist a statement that such an extension is necessary
12 to allow an adequate review of the record.

13 “(C) Notwithstanding subparagraphs (A) and (B), if
14 the period under subparagraph (A), or any extension of
15 that period under subparagraph (B), would otherwise ex-
16 pire after January 19 and before July 20 of the year in
17 which the incumbent President first takes office, then such
18 period or extension, respectively, shall expire on July 20
19 of that year.

20 “(b)(1) For purposes of this section, any claim of
21 constitutionally based privilege against disclosure must be
22 asserted personally by a former President or the incum-
23 bent President, as applicable.

24 “(2) A former President or the incumbent President
25 shall notify the Archivist, the Committee on Oversight and

1 Government Reform of the House of Representatives, and
2 the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental
3 Affairs of the Senate of a privilege claim under paragraph
4 (1) on the same day that the claim is asserted under para-
5 graph (1).

6 “(c)(1) The Archivist shall not make publicly avail-
7 able a Presidential record that is subject to a privilege
8 claim asserted by a former President until the expiration
9 of the 20-day period (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and
10 legal public holidays) beginning on the date the Archivist
11 is notified of the claim.

12 “(2) Upon the expiration of such period the Archivist
13 shall make the record publicly available unless otherwise
14 directed by a court order in an action initiated by the
15 former President under section 2204(e).

16 “(d)(1) The Archivist shall not make publicly avail-
17 able a Presidential record that is subject to a privilege
18 claim asserted by the incumbent President unless—

19 “(A) the incumbent President withdraws the
20 privilege claim; or

21 “(B) the Archivist is otherwise directed by a
22 final court order that is not subject to appeal.

23 “(2) This subsection shall not apply with respect to
24 any Presidential record required to be made available
25 under section 2205(2) (A) or (C).

1 “(e) The Archivist shall adjust any otherwise applica-
2 ble time period under this section as necessary to comply
3 with the return date of any congressional subpoena, judi-
4 cial subpoena, or judicial process.”.

5 (b) RESTRICTIONS.—Section 2204 of title 44, United
6 States Code (relating to restrictions on access to presi-
7 dential records) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
8 lowing new subsection:

9 “(f) The Archivist shall not make available any origi-
10 nal presidential records to any individual claiming access
11 to any presidential record as a designated representative
12 under section 2205(3) if that individual has been convicted
13 of a crime relating to the review, retention, removal, or
14 destruction of records of the Archives.”.

15 (c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) Section
16 2204(d) of title 44, United States Code, is amended by
17 inserting “, except section 2208,” after “chapter”.

18 (2) Section 2207 of title 44, United States Code, is
19 amended in the second sentence by inserting “, except sec-
20 tion 2208,” after “chapter”.

21 (d) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections
22 at the beginning of chapter 22 of title 44, United States
23 Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“2208. Claims of constitutionally based privilege against disclosure.”.

1 **SEC. 3. EXECUTIVE ORDER OF NOVEMBER 1, 2001.**

2 Executive Order No. 13233, dated November 1, 2001

3 (66 Fed. Reg. 56025), shall have no force or effect.

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