

Public Law 104–309
104th Congress

An Act

To express the sense of the Congress that United States Government agencies in possession of records about individuals who are alleged to have committed Nazi war crimes should make these records public.

Oct. 19, 1996
[H.R. 1281]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds that—

(1) during the 104th Congress, Americans commemorated the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of the Second World War and the end of the Holocaust, one of the worst tragedies in history;

(2) it is important to learn all that we can about this terrible era so that we can prevent such a catastrophe from ever happening again;

(3) the cold war is over;

(4) numerous nations, including those of the former Soviet Union, are making public their files on Nazi war criminals as well as crimes committed by agencies of their own governments;

(5) on April 17, 1995, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12958, which will make available certain previously classified national security documents that are at least 25 years old;

William J.
Clinton.

(6) that Executive Order stated: “Our democratic principles require that the American people be informed of the activities of their Government.”;

(7) this year marks the 30th anniversary of the passage of the Freedom of Information Act;

(8) agencies of the United States Government possess information on individuals who ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in Nazi war crimes;

(9) some agencies have routinely denied Freedom of Information Act requests for information about individuals who committed Nazi war crimes;

(10) United States Government agencies may have been in possession of material about the war crimes facilitated by Kurt Waldheim but did not make this information public;

Kurt Waldheim.

(11) it is legitimate not to disclose certain material in Government files if the disclosure would seriously and demonstrably harm current or future national defense, intelligence, or foreign relations activities of the United States and if protection of these matters from disclosure outweighs the public interest of disclosure;

(12) the disclosure of most Nazi war crimes information should not harm United States national interests; and

(13) the Office of Special Investigations of the Department of Justice is engaged in vital work investigating and expelling Nazi war criminals from the United States, accordingly, the records created by these investigations and other actions should not be disclosed, and the investigations and other actions should not be interfered with.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.

It is the sense of the Congress that United States Government agencies in possession of records about individuals who are alleged to have committed Nazi war crimes should make these records public.

Approved October 19, 1996.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 1281:

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 104-819, Pt. 1 (Comm. on Government Reform and Oversight).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, Vol. 142 (1996):

Sept. 24, considered and passed House.

Oct. 3, considered and passed Senate.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS, Vol. 32 (1996):

Oct. 22, Presidential statement.

