

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20510

October 7, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We applaud your recent decision to declassify and make public certain documents related to the September 11, 2001 attacks. In the same spirit of public disclosure and government transparency, we write to urge you to release all remaining classified documents related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy pursuant to the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (P.L. 102-526), also known as the “JFK Act.”

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy was one of the greatest tragedies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and has been the subject of significant public attention over the nearly 58 years since the event. In response to public demand, Congress unanimously passed the JFK Act and it was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush on October 26, 1992. The JFK Records Act requires the federal government to declassify and make available to the public all records relating to President Kennedy’s assassination within 25 years of enactment of the statute. The law was a “unique solution” to the 30 years of government secrecy relating to the assassination<sup>[1]</sup> and the public’s declining trust in government that began in the 1960s.<sup>[2]</sup>

After repeatedly pledging to release all records, President Trump issued an executive memorandum on October 26, 2017 extending the deadline 180 days. On April 26, 2018 he extended the deadline again, directing agencies to review relevant documents for declassification by April 26, 2021. On September 27, 2021 the National Archives and Records Administration’s Public Interest Declassification Board unanimously recommended to you “the maximum public release of records under the JFK Act.”<sup>[3]</sup> You are now required to make a final decision about the release of these records by October 26<sup>th</sup>.

Almost 60 years after the assassination, there continues to be an immense amount of interest as the legacy of this event lingers with the American people. One poll conducted in 2017 found that the majority of Americans, across demographic groups, do not believe the official narrative surrounding President Kennedy’s assassination.<sup>[4]</sup>

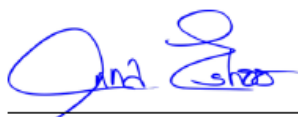
The JFK Records Act states that records relating to the assassination “carry a presumption of immediate disclosure” and “only in the rarest of cases is there any legitimate need for continued protection”<sup>[5]</sup> since many of these documents were more than 30 years old at the time of the law’s enactment. However, 520 documents continue to be withheld from the public today and 15,834 documents are partially or mostly redacted, which seems well beyond the intent of the law.

Democracy requires that decisions made by the government be open to public scrutiny. Yet excessive secrecy surrounding President Kennedy's assassination continues to inspire doubt in the minds of the American public and has a profound impact on the people's trust in their government.<sup>[6]</sup> Only by unsealing these records can our country live up to its ideals as an open society and resolve this painful moment in American history.

It is our hope that you will take the upcoming opportunity to exercise the authority vested in you by the JFK Act to declassify and release to the public all remaining documents related to President Kennedy's assassination. This decision is of the utmost and urgent national importance.

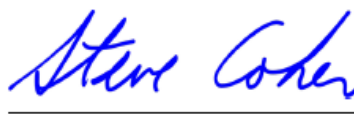
Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



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Anna G. Eshoo  
Member of Congress



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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



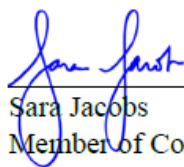
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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



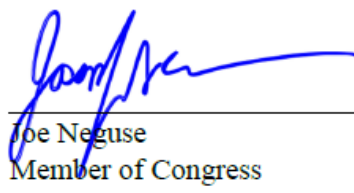
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



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Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



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Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable David S. Ferriero, Archivist of the United States

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<sup>[1]</sup> Henry F. Graff et al., “Final Report of the Assassination Records Review Board” (Assassination Records Review Board, September 30, 1998), <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/review-board/report/arrb-final-report.pdf>.

<sup>[2]</sup> Pew Research Center, “Public Trust in Government: 1958-2021” (Pew Research Center, May 17, 2021), <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/05/17/public-trust-in-government-1958-2021/>.

<sup>[3]</sup> Era Cohen, “President Biden's letter regarding the JFK assassination records.” (Public Interest Declassification Board, September 27, 2021), <https://www.archives.gov/files/pidb/recommendations/pidb-potus-letter-jfk-assassination-records.pdf>.

<sup>[4]</sup> Harry Enten, “Most People Believe in JFK Conspiracy Theories” (FiveThirtyEight, October 23, 2017), <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-one-thing-in-politics-most-americans-believe-in-jfk-conspiracies/>.

<sup>[5]</sup> President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (Pub. L. No. 102-526) §2(a); 44 U.S.C. §2107 note.

<sup>[6]</sup> Graff et al.