

ALA American Library Association

March 10, 2005

TO: Members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives
Committees on Appropriations, Government Affairs, and Government Reform

I am writing on behalf of the American Library Association to request that Congress suspend the proposed transfer of the Nixon Presidential Materials from their present location at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, to the Nixon Library & Birthplace in Yorba Linda, California.

Our concern is occasioned by the request of the Library for at least \$3 million of the public's money and by the recent canceling of the scholarly conference (scheduled for April 28 and 29, 2005) on the subject of "Richard Nixon as Commander-in-Chief: The History of Nixon and Vietnam."

The Nixon Library is requesting \$3 million in public funds to underwrite the transfer of the Nixon Presidential Materials, and millions more to build a new wing to hold the materials. This request is in addition to the \$18 million already paid by the public to the Nixon estate as compensation for the 1974 congressional action to preserve the Nixon tapes and papers from destruction. President Bush did not include the \$3 million in his proposed budget and we urge that Congress reject that request and the request for facility-building funds. The receipt of federal funding for the building of presidential library facilities is prohibited by the Presidential Records Act.

The Nixon materials are already in the possession and care of the archival professionals of the Nixon Presidential Materials Project at the National Archives at College Park – at an annual cost of about \$2 million. We believe the requested funds will be better utilized by a continued processing of the Nixon tapes and papers to expand public access to these important historical materials.

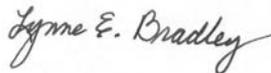
We are additionally concerned about permanent public access to these materials in light of the Nixon Library's recent precipitous cancellation of the scholarly conference after a year's work by the conference participants and Whittier College. The issue here is not so much the conference itself but the appearance that the Nixon Library is willing to abrogate commitments. This is of great concern because there appear to be no publicly available legally-binding commitments on the part of the Nixon estate or the Nixon Library & Birthplace to a collection controlled by the National Archives (outside the collection at the Nixon Presidential Materials Project that is now scheduled to be transferred to the Nixon

Library) and governed by public access laws. Given the recent decision on the part of the Nixon Library and the lack of clear, binding commitments on the part of the estate or the Library to strong public access and long-term preservation of the materials now in control of the National Archives, we question the wisdom not only of expending public funds but of the transfer itself without further congressional review of the details of the National Archives' arrangements with the Nixon Library.

We urge Congress to suspend any action to appropriate funds in support of the Nixon Library transfer, and to hold oversight hearings on the National Archives' arrangements with the Nixon Library.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. Please contact Patrice McDermott, Deputy Director of ALA's Office of Government Relations, at 202-628-8410 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynne E. Bradley".

Lynne E. Bradley
Director, Office of Government Relations