



## S. 3477 – Presidential Historical Records Preservation Act of 2008

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### FLOOR SITUATION

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S. 3477 is being considered on the House floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Senator John Warner (R-VA) on September 11, 2008. The bill was passed by unanimous consent on September 25, 2008.

S. 3477 is expected to be considered on the House floor on September 26, 2008.

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### SUMMARY

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Grants: S. 3477 allows the Archivist to make grants on a competitive basis to promote the historical preservation of and public access to historical records and documents relating to any former President who does not have a Presidential archival depository (Presidential Library) managed by the Federal government. The funds may not be used for maintenance, operating cost, or construction of any facility to house historical records or documents.

Term Limits for Commission Members: The bill decreases the length of term for commission members from four years to two years and limits the number of terms they can serve to four.

Founding Fathers Documents: The bill allows the Archivist to enter into a cooperative agreement to provide online access to the published volumes of the papers of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, James Madison, and other prominent historical figures.

Advisory Committee: The bill allows the Archivist to establish an advisory committee to review the progress of the Founding Fathers editorial projects, develop goals for the projects, annually review the goals, and recommend measures to the Archivist that would aid or encourage the projects. The committee will be made up of 3 nationally recognized historians appointed for not more than 2 consecutive four year terms.

Capital Improvement Plan for Presidential Archival Depositories: The bill requires the Archivist to provide the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations with a 10-year capital improvement plan for all Presidential archival depository institutions.

Databases for Records of Servitude, Emancipation, and Post-Civil War Reconstruction: S. 3477 allows the Archivist to establish an electronically searchable national database consisting of historic records of servitude, emancipation, and post Civil War reconstruction, including the Refugees, Freedman, and Abandoned Land Records, Southern Claims Commission Records, Records of the Freedmen's Bank, Slave Impressments, Slave Payroll Records, and Slave Manifest to assist African Americans and others in conducting genealogical and historical research. It also allows the Executive Director of the National Historical Publications and Records Commissions to make grants to states, colleges and universities, museums, libraries, and genealogical associations to preserve records and establish databases of local records servitude, emancipation, and post-Civil War reconstruction.

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### BACKGROUND

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President Franklin Delano Roosevelt formally began the Presidential Library system when he donated his personal and Presidential papers to the Federal Government in 1939 and pledged that part of his estate



# LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

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in Hyde Park to the United States for the construction of a library and museum building. In 1955, Congress passed the Presidential Libraries Act, which established a system of privately erected and federally maintained libraries.

The Presidential Library system currently runs 12 Presidential Libraries. When a President leaves office, the National Archives and Records Administration establishes a Presidential project until a new library is built and transferred to the Government.

*\*Note: Prior to the creation of Presidential Libraries, Presidents would often disperse Presidential papers at the end of the administration. Some of those papers have been compiled at the Library of Congress and private libraries and collections, but others have been destroyed or lost.*

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## COST

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At the time of publication, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) had not yet scored this legislation.

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## STAFF CONTACT

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