

**THE WHITE HOUSE**

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM FOR ALL PERSONNEL

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SUBJECT: Presidential Records Act Obligations

**Purpose**

To remind all personnel of their obligation to preserve and maintain presidential records, as required by the Presidential Records Act ("PRA").

**Discussion**

The PRA requires that the Administration take steps "to assure that the activities, deliberations, decisions, and policies that reflect the performance of the President's constitutional, statutory, or other official or ceremonial duties are adequately documented and that such records are preserved and maintained." This memorandum outlines what materials constitute "presidential records" and what steps you must take to ensure their preservation.

*What Are Presidential Records?*

"Presidential records" are broadly defined as "documentary materials . . . created or received by the President, the President's immediate staff, or a unit or individual of the Executive Office of the President whose function is to advise or assist the President,<sup>1</sup> in the course of conducting activities which relate to or have an effect upon the carrying out of the constitutional, statutory, or other official or ceremonial duties of the President." Presidential records include material in both paper and electronic form.

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<sup>1</sup> The PRA applies to the following Executive Office of the President ("EOP") entities: White House Office, Office of the Vice President, Council of Economic Advisors, Executive Residence, Office of Administration, Office of Policy Development (DPC and NEC), National Security Council, President's Commission on White House Fellows, and President's Intelligence Advisory Board.

Some materials that are considered presidential records include:

- Memos, letters, notes, emails, faxes, reports, and other written communications sent to or received from others, including materials sent to or received from persons outside government;
- Drafts, marked-up edits, or comments that are circulated or shown to others;
- Notes or minutes of meetings that are circulated or shown to others;
- Meeting minutes, memos to file, notes, drafts, and similar documents that are created or saved for the purpose of accurately documenting the activities or deliberations of the Administration, even if such materials are not circulated or shown to others;
- PowerPoint presentations, audio recordings, photos, and video footage;
- Emails, chats, and other electronic communications that are created or received in the course of conducting activities related to the performance of the President's duties, but that are sent from or received on non-official accounts; and
- Transition materials, but only if they are used in the course of official government business.

Purely personal records that do not relate to or have an effect upon the carrying out of the President's official duties do not need to be preserved. Similarly, political records need not be preserved unless they relate to or have a direct effect upon the President's official duties. Finally, certain materials that lack historic value are not covered by the PRA – for example, notes, drafts, and similar documents that are not circulated or that are not created or saved for the purpose of documenting the activities or deliberations of the Administration.

#### *What Steps Should Be Taken to Preserve Presidential Records?*

**Paper Records.** You should preserve hard-copy presidential records in organized files. To the extent practicable, you should categorize materials as presidential records when they are created or received. You should file presidential records separately from other material. Paper records are typically collected at the end of your White House service, but may be collected at an earlier point by contacting the White House Office of Records Management ("WHORM"). Any records collected by WHORM remain available to the staff member who provided them.

**Electronic Records.** You must preserve electronic communications that are presidential records. **You are required to conduct all work-related communications on your official EOP email account**, except in emergency circumstances when you cannot access the EOP system and must accomplish time sensitive work. Emails and attachments sent to and from your EOP account are automatically archived.

*If you ever send or receive email that qualifies as a presidential record using any other account, you **must** preserve that email by copying it to your official EOP email account or by forwarding it to your official email account within twenty (20) days. After preserving the email, you must delete it from the non-EOP account. **Any employee who intentionally fails to take these actions may be subject to administrative or even criminal penalties.***

The same rules apply to other forms of electronic communication, including text messages. ***You should not use instant messaging systems, social networks, or other internet-based means of electronic communication to conduct official business without the approval of the Office of the White House Counsel.*** If you ever generate or receive presidential records on such platforms, you must preserve them by sending them to your EOP email account via a screenshot or other means. After preserving the communications, you must delete them from the non-EOP platform.

Electronic documents that qualify as presidential records and only exist in electronic format must be saved on your network drive or regularly synchronized to it. You must archive files that you are no longer using; you must not delete them. Your network drive will be captured upon your departure from the EOP, which will secure any presidential records you have saved.

At all times, please keep in mind that presidential records are the property of the United States. You may not dispose of presidential records. When you leave EOP employment, you may not take any presidential records with you. You also may not take copies of any presidential records without prior authorization from the Counsel's office. The willful destruction or concealment of federal records is a federal crime punishable by fines and imprisonment.

Any questions about compliance with the Presidential Records Act may be directed to Stefan Passantino (b) (6), Scott Gast (b) (6), or Jim Schultz (b) (6).