

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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Ranking Member Robert Garcia Task Force on Declassification of Federal Secrets “The JFK Files” April 1, 2025

Thank you, Chairwoman Luna.

Chair Luna, as you know, last week you and I had a productive meeting with our witness, Mr. Morley. I appreciated that invitation and our conversation. You and I agreed that faith in government is at an all-time low.

I told you that I shared your belief in transparency, and I hoped we could work together on a reasonable, responsible process which follows the facts. I want to start by laying out a few of those facts, which I hope we can all agree with.

President Kennedy’s assassination was a defining moment in our history, and a genuine trauma for millions of Americans. It has been an object of fascination for decades.

It is also a real human tragedy. President Kennedy was a son, a father, a brother and a husband. I don’t want us to lose sight of President Kennedy’s legacy. President Kennedy stood proudly for American leadership. He fought for our values all over the world.

In the face of Russian threats, he told the free people of Europe that he stood with them with the timeless phrase “Ich bin ein Berliner.”

He told the world that America would “pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.”

He founded USAID and the Peace Corps. His patience and restraint guided the world through the Cuban missile crisis.

He reminded us, that “civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof.”

He broke barriers as the first Catholic president.

In his inaugural address he reminded us that we have the power to abolish all forms of human poverty.

He believed in service.

He believed that the government could achieve big things and help people.

He laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Act and called on Americans to address what he described as a “moral crisis” confronting the nation—the continued reality of racial injustice in the United States.

I don’t want us to lose sight of this legacy today.

I share the Chairwoman’s interest in transparency. This has been a bipartisan priority for decades. The House Select Committee; the JFK Records Act; and with releases of records including the most recent tens of thousands of pages, we know today that our federal agencies obscured relevant information and kept facts from the public for far too long.

Overclassification at the expense of transparency is something that we should all take seriously, and we should work together to make sure truth comes to light. If new evidence surfaces indicating the CIA and FBI have been less than forthcoming with the American people, we should not hide it.

But let’s be very clear: we can’t get ahead of the evidence. It’s not responsible to speculate.

We may never find the single document or piece of evidence which answers every outstanding question about President Kennedy.

And if this committee promises more than it could ever deliver—especially if we’re not supported by real evidence—we will actually harm the public trust even more.

This has real consequences. We know the rush to declassify documents earlier this month published the Social Security numbers of at least 400 public servants, who worked honorably and have done nothing wrong, and were doxed for no reason.

The American people already have concerns about how the government is handling data and classified information.

I think it’s important that we recognize that processes and safeguards exist for a reason.

I hope our witnesses today will focus their testimony on information which is grounded in the facts.

Now is not the time to jump to conclusions or to speculate. It is not the time to vilify public servants or undermine the work of our intelligence community or National Archives.

I hope we can have an informative and respectful hearing, and I yield back.

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