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House of Representatives

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Ranking Member Robert Garcia
Task Force on Declassification of Federal Secrets
**“The JFK Files: Assessing Over 60 Years of the Federal Government’s Obstruction,
Obfuscation, and Deception”**
May 20, 2025

Thank you, Chairwoman Luna.

As this task force continues its work, we need to continue to follow the facts and provide transparency for the American people.

The responsible declassification of historical records allows the public to gain a fuller understanding of our past, restores trust in our institutions, and ensures accountability in our shared government.

On March 18, 2025, the National Archives and Records Administration released more than 77,000 pages related to the November 22, 1963, assassination of President Kennedy.

We know that these documents were mostly already in the public record, but continued work to make documents more accessible is important and valuable.

Over the past several decades, our government has collected and released almost 6 million pages of documents consistent with the President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992.

Together, we can push back on decades of overclassification—relating not just to the JFK assassination, but a variety of subjects.

The FBI and CIA of the 1960s were deeply flawed institutions, and while they have taken lessons from their past trespasses, there is no question that they have continued to over-classify information, often out of an unnecessary abundance of caution.

But transparency is how we ensure accountability and trust. The American people have every right to know as much as possible about what our government does and how our tax dollars are spent.

I understand the interest in a second hearing on President Kennedy’s assassination, but I hope our task force can continue to work in a bipartisan way on many of the other topics under its purview that are important to the public.

As we hear testimony from our witnesses today, I want to make sure we remember that President Kennedy's assassination is more than a historical event, it was a human tragedy.

President Kennedy was a husband, a father, a brother, and a son. Revisiting and relitigating a tragic killing is painful for the real people who were impacted. We should be respectful and responsible as we work to address the public's questions about this tragedy.

And we know that President Kennedy's legacy has made America the great country it is. At a time when we are looking at a huge push to cut taxes for the wealthiest while slashing Medicaid coverage for the needy, we should remember that President Kennedy actually believed in a society where Americans took care of one another.

He fought to expand care and laid the groundwork for the program which would eventually become Medicare, which was enacted under President Johnson.

At a time when civil rights are under attack, we should remember that President Kennedy proposed the Civil Rights Act which became a landmark law in 1964.

At a time when the Courts and the Rule of Law are being threatened and challenged, we should remember that President Kennedy worked tirelessly to enforce court orders—even sending US Marshalls and the National Guard to desegregate the University of Mississippi.

At a time when Social Security is being threatened, we should remember that President Kennedy actually expanded Social Security to increase benefits and cover more people with disabilities.

While medical and scientific research is being slashed, we should remember that President Kennedy invested in scientific discovery and challenged us to put a man on the moon.

He understood that immigrants enrich and strengthen our country. In 1962, Kennedy signed the Migration and Refugee Assistance Act, which was created to help foreign nationals from the Western Hemisphere who had fled persecution in their home countries.

He knew that our country was strongest as a global leader, fighting for freedom and democracy.

He believed in working through our alliances.

He founded USAID because he knew that soft power makes our country safer and stronger, and that helping vulnerable people is actually good for Americans, too.

These are all facts that I hope we keep in mind as we hear testimony today.

Thank you and I yield back.

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