

July 25, 2018

Mr. David Ferriero
Archivist of the United States
National Archives and Records Administration
via e-mail: david.ferriero@nara.gov

Dear Mr. Ferriero:

Immigration from across the globe is a defining element of the history of the United States. As people from every corner of the world have come to this country, measures to regulate the flow of people across our borders have also been centrally important to our history, indeed from the early days of the republic. Americans have debated issues of exclusion and inclusion for more than three centuries, and the American Historical Association is committed to the ability of historians to document and interpret not only those debates, but also the policies and practices that have stimulated such conversation. We are concerned, therefore, about the retention of and access to the relevant documents.

In particular, at the current moment, the AHA is dismayed by threats to the preservation of records relating to the treatment of immigrants by the US Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Each of these agencies plays a large role in the implementation of government immigration policies. Given their importance, the current matter regarding consideration by NARA of the proposed schedule of record destruction is of vital importance to historians and the American public.

The American Historical Association urges you to deny any request for authorization to permit ICE or the Border Patrol to destroy records related to individuals in their custody. The potential historical significance of the events documented in these records makes it incumbent upon NARA to ensure their preservation for the long term. NARA should require that all records of investigations related to detainees should be retained regardless of the outcome of the case.

While we are aware that NARA granted the request from ICE on June 20, 2017, regarding the disposition of 11 record sets, it is our understanding, according to statements made by Chief Records Officer Laurence Brewer at a public meeting on June 11, that NARA is currently working with ICE records management staff on revisions to the schedule. When historians look back on this period of US history, it is vital that official records related to this work be available as sources. Without the retention of such important and vital sources, our knowledge of history, culture, and politics will suffer.

Sincerely,



James Grossman
Executive Director