

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

AMERICAN HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION, *et al.*,

Plaintiffs,

v.

DONALD TRUMP, in his official capacity
as President of the United States and in his
personal capacity, *et al.*,

Defendants.

Case No. 25-cv-03657

DECLARATION OF SARAH WEICKSEL

1. I, Sarah Weicksel, am the Executive Director of the American Historical Association (AHA). I have served in this role since July 1, 2025, having previously served as AHA's director of research and publications.

2. In addition to my role at the AHA, I currently serve on the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) Federal Freedom of Information Act Advisory Board.

3. I am a professional historian (PhD, University of Chicago). I am an expert in nineteenth century United States history, with an emphasis on the American Civil War. I have done extensive research using governmental records held in the collections of the National Archives.

4. AHA is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. It was founded in 1884 and incorporated by Congress in 1889 "for the promotion of historical studies, the collection and preservation of historical manuscripts and for kindred purposes in the interest of American history and of history in America." AHA's mission is to enhance the

work of historians, including by promoting professional standards and ethics, innovative scholarship and teaching, academic freedom, and international collaboration. Central to this mission is the preservation of historical documents, including Presidential records.

5. AHA is the largest membership association of historians in the world, with over 10,200 members. AHA serves historians in a wide variety of professions and represents every historical era and geographical area.

6. AHA and many of its members have a unique interest in presidential records and have previously pursued legal action to enforce the PRA. *See, e.g., Am. Hist. Ass'n v. Peterson*, 876 F. Supp. 1300 (D.D.C. 1995); *Am. Hist. Ass'n v. Nat'l Archives & Recs. Admin.*, 516 F. Supp. 2d 90 (D.D.C. 2007).

7. AHA's members include historians, researchers, and educators who routinely seek and use Presidential records covered by the PRA as part of their academic research and educational work. Such members include Matthew Connelly, Professor of History and Vice Dean for AI Initiatives in Arts and Sciences at Columbia University; Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, Professor of History at The New School; Timothy Naftali, Senior Research Scholar in the Faculty of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University; and Kathryn Brownell, Professor of History at Purdue University.

8. AHA and its members regularly request and make use of presidential and vice presidential records. These records are cited in many books, publications, and other forms of historical scholarship, and are the basis for historians' research in many fields of study. Presidential records are crucial for historians who study the history of the military, foreign relations, and the federal government. Historians also use presidential records to understand decisions and policies related to topics including, but not limited to, immigration, labor

relations, religion, science and technology, business and economics, and a myriad of other subjects. Without these records, future generations of historians will not have access to the complete documentation of our nation's history.

9. The AHA supports historical offices in federal agencies, some of which make extensive use of presidential records. The Foreign Relations Authorization Act, for example, includes a statute that requires an AHA-nominated representative be appointed to the Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation. 22. U.S.C. § 4356(a)(3)(B). The Advisory Committee reviews historical records, advises, and makes recommendations to the Office of the Historian and Foreign Service Institute concerning the *Foreign Relations of the United States* documentary series (FRUS). This vital committee provides crucial support for the continuous work of publishing the Congressionally-mandated *FRUS* series by monitoring the overall compilation and editorial process of the series, and advising on all aspects of the preparation and declassification of the series. The Advisory Committee also reviews the declassification procedures of the Department of State and all guidelines used in the declassification process, as provided in Public Law 102-138.

10. The Office of the Historian and the Historical Advisory Committee at the US Department of State use presidential records in the *FRUS* series. The *FRUS*, which began in 1861 under President Lincoln, presents the official documentary record of major US foreign policy decisions and significant diplomatic activity. The Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense publishes a Secretaries of Defense Historical Series that uses presidential records for its monographs on military history and strategy. Presidential records are essential to understanding the history of US foreign relations and the military and equipping current and

future diplomatic and military leaders with the comprehensive information and resources they need to deal with conflicts and missions.

11. The AHA has hosted events on presidential records, including online webinars. The AHA hosted a 2023 webinar on the Presidential Records Act and a 2021 webinar on Preserving Records: Archives and Presidential Transitions. Presentations drawn from research in presidential records are regularly presented at the AHA's annual meeting, the largest gathering of historians in the world. Prior to the grant funding's termination, the AHA was selected to host a National Endowment for the Humanities Institute for Higher Education Faculty, which would have made extensive use of presidential records to examine the history of US environmental policy.

12. AHA is well aware of the perils of failing to preserve and make available historical information about the functioning of the federal government. In 1908, the Council of the AHA "pointed out that the lack of provisions for the 'orderly keeping of these public documents' made them 'unavailable for historical work.'" In 1910, having found that many governmental records from the previous century had been lost or destroyed, AHA petitioned Congress to construct a "national archive depository, where the records of the Government may be concentrated, properly cared for, and preserved."¹ These records, AHA asserted, were both "muniments of our national advancement" and "material which historians must use in order to ascertain the truth." The resulting institution became the National Archives and Records Administration.

13. AHA's members rely on Presidential records to explore and reveal the functioning of every aspect of the executive branch—from policy consideration to policy

¹ First Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States, 1934-1935, <https://perma.cc/HS62-USWD>.

implementation. AHA's members use Presidential records preserved and made public under the PRA for the purposes Congress intended in enacting the PRA, including producing historical scholarship, teaching, and museum work. Records made accessible under the PRA also enable AHA members to serve as expert witnesses.

14. If Presidential records are not preserved and made publicly accessible as the PRA requires, AHA and its members will be directly injured. AHA's members will be unable to access key historical documents upon which they rely for their research and writing. Without this documentation, they would be forced to rely upon second-hand reports that lack the credibility of primary sources. Failure to properly preserve records will impoverish the historical discipline more broadly, inhibiting research and teaching in high schools, colleges, museums, and other public venues. A complete and comprehensive historical record is necessary for understanding our nation's history.

15. AHA members will lose access to information that would create the historical record of presidential activities, and that would help to educate the public about that history. AHA members would be left with an incomplete historical record by which to professionally research, produce scholarship on, and teach U.S. history. Once lost, this information is irretrievable, causing AHA and its members to lose access to the documents and other materials essential to understanding, and learning from, our past.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on April 13, 2026, in Washington, DC.



Sarah Weicksel
Executive Director,
American Historical Association