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Jimmy Carter and the Presidential Library System

Richard Dees Funderburke

All inquiry into antiquity, - all curiosity respecting the Pyramids, the excavated cities, Stonehenge, the Ohio Circles, Mexico, Memphis, - is the desire to do away this wild, savage, and preposterous There or Then, and introduce in its place the Here and the Now.

("History," Essays, First Series, Ralph W. Emerson)

Ralph Waldo Emerson felt that the study of history was significant to the individual for what it revealed about his own life. The monuments of other ages should be studied until the student "lives along the whole line of temples and sphinxes and catacombs, passes through them all with satisfaction, and they live again to
the mind, or are now." 1 The interest with which he might have viewed his own nation's monuments in the form of presidential libraries can only be surmised. He might have been appalled that the simple democratic nation he knew in the 1840s had come to erect imposing memorials to its presidents. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine him finding fault with the efforts to preserve and make available to its citizens the written record of the country's chief executives. Certainly, it is much easier to make the "There and Then" of history, the "Here and Now" of knowledge, if the full documentary record of a time is preserved.

The National Archives and Records Service (NARS) 2 has known criticism from the beginning and one particular component has received the most public attention—the presidential library system. From its beginnings under Franklin D. Roosevelt in the late 1930s, the library system has been at the center of scholarly and eventually public debates over its proper role in society. Until the mid-1970s, the debate never reached much beyond the academic world. However, with the growth of the imperial presidency and the subsequent Watergate debacle, the library system moved closer to center stage as the object of a significant political debate.

The Presidential Records Act of 1978 placed the ownership of presidential records generated after 1981 in the hands of the federal government. Nevertheless, there were other significant issues still to be decided and politicians such as Senator Lawton Chiles (D-Florida) began to raise the equally important questions of site location, funding, increasing costs, archival building


2 Since 1984 known as National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).
standards, and the problems of the General Services Administration (GSA)/NARS relationship.

The story, therefore, of the presidential library system during the last two years of Jimmy Carter's presidency is a particularly interesting one. During that period, NARS and the White House worked to assuage the concerns over the financing of the system and to define its proper role in American society and culture. In one sense, it is the story of adroit political maneuvering and bureaucratic power struggles during a time of economic stringencies. In another, it is the clash of presidential and congressional wills over the emblems of power. There were disagreements over the size of the libraries, space allocation for museum versus archives, centralization or decentralization of the facilities, building standards, and geographical access. The question of the purpose or role of the libraries in American society was more nebulous. In the post-Watergate era presided over by Jimmy Carter, the presidency came to be criticized heavily for its imperial tendencies and it was especially galling to many that these tendencies were carried over into the former president's life, during which ex-presidents often became wealthy men. To members of a resurgent Congress, it was time to reexamine and curtail the cost to the taxpayer for office staffs, Secret Service protection, and that largest and most perpetual expense, the monumental presidential library.

In the academic world, criticism of the libraries was not new. As early as 1954, David Lloyd, executive director of the Harry S. Truman Library, Inc., in a speech to a joint meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA) and the Society of American Archivists (SAA), chided scholars for wanting a central depository \(^3\) and praised decentralization for making historical

materials more widely available.\textsuperscript{4} A few years later, Herman Kahn, director of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, supported decentralization for much the same reasons and also as part of a much larger trend of decentralization in all areas of government.\textsuperscript{5}

By the late 1960s, when the system had grown to four completed libraries, the centralization issue remained, but some scholars were beginning to criticize the "monumental" nature of the edifices.\textsuperscript{6} Noted diplomatic historian Herbert Feis wrote a scathing article along these lines for the prestigious journal \textit{Foreign Affairs}.\textsuperscript{7} In an article for \textit{American Libraries}, Ada Louise Huxtable called the Lyndon B. Johnson Library a "museum-memorial" designed to serve a former president's ego.\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Library Journal} editor John Berry derided the "monumental-libraries" and asked that post-Watergate question: why public ownership was not the appropriate way to handle the documents.\textsuperscript{8} Former SAA president H. G. Jones also called for public ownership of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{4} \textit{Ibid.}, 109.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Herman Kahn, "The Presidential Library - A New Institution," \textit{Special Libraries} 50 (January 1959): 110.
\item \textsuperscript{7} Herbert Feis, "The Shackled Historian," \textit{Foreign Affairs} 45 (January 1967): 339-341.
\item \textsuperscript{8} Ada Louise Huxtable, "Lyndon Baines Johnson Library: A Success as Architecture and as Monument," \textit{American Libraries} 2 (7), (July-August 1971): 607-671.
\item \textsuperscript{9} John Berry, "No More Presidential Libraries," \textit{Library Journal} 99 (November 1974): 2787.
\end{itemize}
presidential materials and ridiculed the LBJ Library as that "pharaoh's monument in Austin."  

The overriding concern about ownership was not surprising in the mid-1970s and, indeed, most writers referred to Watergate as the inspiration for their ideas. DePauw University archivist David Horn also acknowledged the significance of the national scandal which had permanently changed the American "political and moral landscape." Nevertheless, he asked several pertinent questions about the cost and location of presidential libraries:

- Is it advisable to locate these important research centers in different areas of the country, near the Presidents' birthplaces? Are such separate centers too expensive? Is access too difficult for researchers?

After 1978, these questions came to occupy center stage.

That the office of president had been tarnished by the Watergate scandal was not lost on Jimmy Carter. The symbols of power were considered so suspect by Carter that he went so far as to ban the playing of "Hail to the Chief" at the beginning of his administration. In a response to an interviewer in late 1977, Carter also stated:

- The pomp and ceremony of office does not appeal to me, and I don't believe it is a necessary part of the Presidency in a Democratic Nation like our own. I am no better than anyone else. And the people that I admire most who


have lived in this house have taken the same attitude. Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Truman have minimized the pomp and ceremony and pride, personal pride that accrues sometimes to Presidents.\textsuperscript{13}

On top of this, a weakened president had to face a resurgent congress, eager to flex some long atrophied muscles.

In April of 1979, a major article appeared in \textit{U.S. News and World Report} about the money spent by the government on former Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.\textsuperscript{14} Subtitled "No taxpayer money is spared to support ex-Presidents in style," the article concentrated on those benefits due Nixon and Ford under the Former Presidents Act of 1958 and the Presidential Transition Act of 1963. These two laws had been passed to provide ex-presidents pensions, staff funding, and special allotments to handle the costs of transition to private life. Amended in 1965, the former act provided Secret Service protection to the former chief executives and their families. According to the article, however, there were gross abuses. Within days of the publication of this article, syndicated columnist Mary McGrory excoriated the former presidents for receiving this public largesse. In conclusion, she said:

\textquote{. . .keeping ex-presidents in imperial splendor when the poor are getting their fuel allowance cut for austerity's sake and every day-care center is being scrutinized like a}

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\textsuperscript{13} Press Interview, 28 December 1977, with Barbara Walters, Tom Brokaw, Bob Schieffer and Robert McNeil, "Former Presidents [5]," Box 30, Staff Offices Administration - Hugh Carter, Jimmy Carter Library. (Hereinafter Staff Offices Administration will be designated as SOA and Jimmy Carter Library as JCL.)

thieves' hideout for waste, is an excess to make the blood boil, especially on April 15.\textsuperscript{15}

Both of these articles were sent to Hugh Carter, special assistant to the president for administration, and other staffers. Neither Congress nor the White House was unaware of these growing expenses prior to their exposé in \textit{U.S. News}. In 1975, the Senate Appropriations Committee had requested a report from the United States comptroller general on federal assistance to former presidents under the Former Presidents and Presidential Transition Acts. The report, dated 24 December 1975, briefly mentioned the Presidential Libraries Act of 1955, but suggested no changes in this law.\textsuperscript{16} Hugh Carter had a copy of this report as well as one prepared by the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress in December of 1976. In this second, lengthy report, the authors mentioned presidential libraries only briefly in an appendix, almost as an afterthought.\textsuperscript{17}

It was only appropriate that Hugh Carter should have these reports. A relative of the president and a key member of the White House staff, he was a major figure in almost all matters dealing with NARS, presidential papers, and also former presidents. In fact, on the suggestion of Hamilton Jordan, Hugh Carter had been appointed the White House liaison officer to

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\textsuperscript{15} Mary McGrory, "Unlike the Poor, Ex-Presidents Get Welfare No Matter What," \textit{Washington Star} (16 April 1979); A-4 in "Former Presidents [2]," Box 30, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.

\textsuperscript{16} Elmer Staats, "Federal Assistance for Presidential Transitions: Recommendations for Changes in Legislation" in "Former Presidents Act [3]," Box 31, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.

\textsuperscript{17} Sharon Gressle and Stephanie Smith, "Benefits to Former Presidents of the United States," (Congressional Research Service, 20 December 1976) in "Former Presidents Acts [5]," Box 31, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.
\end{flushright}
former presidents and their families. His deputy in this position was Marvin Beaman of the White House Military Office. Other staffers actively involved in these matters were Hugh Carter's assistant, Veronica Pickman, and Vice-President Walter Mondale's aide, Michael Berman. Together or separately, they would deal with most of the subsequent legislative efforts to alter the presidential libraries system.

By the fall of 1979, the slow wheels of Congress had turned and hearings had been scheduled for November. During the summer, Senator David Pryor (D-Arkansas) had teamed up with Senator Chiles to sponsor joint hearings before their subcommittees on Civil Service and General Services (chaired by Pryor) and on Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government (chaired by Chiles). It was also at this time that the libraries were combined with the provisions of the Former Presidents Act and the Presidential Transition Act for scrutiny and reform.

For their hearings, Chiles and Pryor called on Admiral Rowland Freeman, newly appointed administrator of the GSA (parent agency of NARS), to testify "on the desirability of continuing the Presidential Libraries System in its current form." Freeman was enjoined to provide alternatives to the present system with accompanying advantages and disadvantages and comments on the GSA proposal to establish architectural design standards for all future libraries. Also called to testify were

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18 Memo, Hamilton Jordan to President Carter, 24 March 1977, "Former Presidents [2]," Box 30, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.

19 Letter, Marvin Beaman to General Kenneth Dohleman, 22 December 1978, "Former Presidents [2]," Box 30, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.

20 Letter, Senators David Pryor and Lawton Chiles to Rowland Freeman, 16 October 1979, "Former President's Office," SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.
Donald Eirich, associate director of the General Accounting Office (GAO); John Broderick, assistant librarian for research services at the Library of Congress; and Richard Kirkendall, professor of history at Indiana University and spokesman for the American Historical Association.

The first day's testimony dealt with the presidential libraries, and Senator Chiles took the lead, stressing economic factors in his opening statement. Commenting that the hearings were necessary due to the great increase in expenditure for former presidents, the senator pointed to a 285-times increase in costs for these services and facilities from $64,000 in 1955 to an estimated $18.3 million in 1980. For the libraries alone, the increase had been from $375,000 per facility to $1.6 million per facility. This cost, along with spending for staffing and Secret Service, exacerbated complaints of an "Imperial Presidency" which was "not popular with the American people nor is it consistent with our history as a nation." 21 Senator Pryor echoed his colleague, stating that with "the rapid growth and with an almost seeming unquenchable thirst for money at the time a President and a family leaves the White House . . .; I think that we owe. . . the taxpayers our very best effort to make some sense out of this particular program."

GAO's Eirich tended to support the Chiles/Pryor emphasis. He reached three main conclusions beginning with a concern over a lack of restrictions on what the GSA could accept as an archival depository. This lack of standards had led to the acceptance of a facility for President Ford in which the archives was separated from the museum by three hundred miles. Furthermore, the


22 Ibid., 8.
GAO believed that, although the prime function of the libraries was to preserve papers, most management tended to concentrate its attention on the museum function. According to GAO estimates, the savings for a centralized facility with no museum might be as high as $687 million projected over the next hundred years.\textsuperscript{23}

The amplitude of these savings clearly impressed Senator Chiles, as did the minuscule costs of the Library of Congress figures presented by John Broderick. According to Broderick, the cost of providing the papers of twenty-three presidents prior to Herbert Hoover to researchers was $200,000 annually. In addition, the expense of microfilming the entire manuscript collection was only $1.5 million, including presidential papers.\textsuperscript{24}

Testimony took a dramatic change in emphasis with that of historian Richard Kirkendall, who strongly opposed centralization. In transcripts of his remarks annotated by White House staff, the historian stated that scholars were accustomed to decentralized sources and that centralization falsely assumed that the most important researchers were located on the east coast. Furthermore, centralized libraries would mean less knowledgeable archivists and a lower ability to attract collections of related materials. In discussing the low proportion of researchers as facility users, Kirkendall emphasized that tourists and students utilizing the museums were receiving educational benefits from their visits.\textsuperscript{25}

Senator Chiles undoubtedly was better pleased with the remarks of Rowland Freeman of the GSA. Stating that he approved the curbing of excess cost, Freeman urged a major

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 22-32.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 62-64.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 90-92.
cutback in the museum function and that exhibits be archival in nature (White House note in margin at this point states "& to hell w/culture"). Real savings, however, would come in restricting maintenance expenditures, "As I see it, the alternatives facing us are to centralize, to combine functions, or to limit the size and scale of each library." If centralization was approved, the administrator had some specific recommendations for a "cluster of buildings in a campuslike setting" large enough for six libraries. On a twenty-five year projection, this centralized facility would save close to sixty million dollars over six individual libraries. The GSA should also be able to specify standards on archival storage areas, research areas, processing space, and the "ratio of administrative and exhibit space for these archival facilities." With appropriate legislation, the administrator could put a ceiling on operating costs (with an inflation factor) and have final approval of building design and size.

After several days of hearings on staffing and Secret Service protection, Chiles turned his attention to drafting legislation. In the White House, Marvin Beaman urged Hugh Carter to "closely monitor the situation to see what Senators Chiles and Pryor will do next." After talking with Michael Hall, chief clerk of Chiles's subcommittee, Beaman had obtained a promise to allow the administration to participate in the formulation of any legislation and stressed the importance of staying in touch with Hall. That this was done is evident from a memo to the president from Hugh Carter in December, stating that "although we have encountered some difficulty in gaining their cooperation, we are continuing to

26 Ibid., 70.

27 Ibid., 71-74.

28 Memo, Marty Beaman to Hugh Carter, 13 November 1979, "Former President's Office," Box 31, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.
try to meet with Senator Chiles or his staff prior to the introduction of any amendments [to the Former Presidents Act and other laws].”

By January 1980, Hugh Carter, Marvin Beaman, Mike Berman, and John Henderson of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) had received draft legislation from Chiles. The proposal made considerable changes in the then current presidential libraries system, including calls to:

1) end the creation of presidential archival facilities as of January 20, 1981;
2) require the deposit of all presidential records in a central library as of January 20, 1981;
3) order the GSA to provide Congress with a plan for a central library for all presidents after January 20, 1981—such facility to be initially for two presidents but expandable. Each president to be allowed the average space in current presidential libraries plus five percent which was the maximum allowed for a museum;
4) allow the GSA to duplicate, microfilm, and then sell such reproductions of major records;
5) require the White House to dispose of presidential materials while still in office "which no longer have administrative, historical, informational or evidentiary value," after the archivist of the United States' approval; and
6) set an overall effective date of January 20, 1981.

The White House had major reservations and objections to these proposals. Primary opposition was to the effective date

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29 Memo, Hugh Carter to President Carter, [December 1979?], "Former Presidents [1]," Box 30, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.

30 Copy of Chiles/Pryor bill to "reform the laws relating to Former Presidents" in "Presidential Libraries - Sen. Chiles' Bill," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL.
(because it divided a second term for President Carter from his first term in regard to his papers) and to the whole concept of a central library as being less costly. After urging that any new legislation only affect presidents after Carter, the White House proposed that limits be set on federal expenditures for all libraries and that the GSA administrator "approve the archival facilities for each library." GSA could also be ordered to approve the design, operational methods, and any proposed extra-archival programs for any future single archives.

If, however, a centralized library was mandated, the administration had several suggestions. Office space should be provided for each former president. Plans should more carefully consider the ever-increasing amount of paper produced during each succeeding presidency as well as the differences between one, and two-term presidents. Exhibit space should remain at the current average of thirty-two percent and the president's staff should not be required to expend their valuable time disposing of records while still in office. Finally, microfilming and duplication of vast presidential holdings had not been proven as a means of greater economy in records management.

These views were presented to George Patton of Chiles's staff as well as Michael Hall and Knox Walkup (staff director for Senator Pryor's subcommittee) in January 1980. In a memo about this meeting, John Henderson indicated little agreement or promise of compromise between the Senate and the White House. He reported that the congressional staffers had stood firm on the concept of a central library and that they doubted the GSA could impose effective standards on a politically potent former chief

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31 "Presidential Libraries, Comparison Between Present Law and Chiles/Pryor Bill" in "Presidential Libraries - Senator Chiles' Bill," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL.

32 Ibid.
executive. As for increased museum space, Henderson encountered strong general opposition and, despite persistent arguments against the microfilming proposal, felt the senators will "fight for this provision as a good compromise" to allay the opposition of scholars and to counter the regional pride arguments.\(^\text{33}\)

In a concluding statement, Henderson suggested that both Pryor and Chiles were using these issues for their own personal ends and were taking advantage of a generally weak presidential position:

Patton's general comments somewhat confirm our earlier information that the bill is an effort to bolster Pryor's and particularly Chiles' credibility with other Senators. Patton's comment on the unique set of circumstances present this year seems to suggest they will push the bill in some form this year. Although we could possibly mount a campaign to convince them of the possible savings from our approach, I foresee an almost impossible burden of proof that we would have to carry.\(^\text{34}\)

During this same time period, Carter's staff had to deal with another crisis--the so-called revolution at NARS. GSA's Rowland Freeman attempted to disperse archival materials held in Washington to regional depositories. NARS staff members and scholars nationwide asked President Carter to order Freeman to make a proper archival study before dispersing records, that the position of archivist of the United States be filled by a qualified person, and that the location and status of the National Archives


\[^{34}\] Ibid.
within the executive branch be studied. While Freeman and the maintenance of NARS within the GSA were supported by Jack Watson, soon to be Carter's chief of staff, and probably by the president, in regard to presidential libraries and with Hugh Carter, Freeman's views were undoubtedly suspect. During the NARS/GSA conflict, Marvin Beaman reported to Hugh Carter on comments made by the admiral in his staff meetings. These included "I am supporting Presidential libraries, but the time has come that we look to a single facility," on 6 November 1979, and "a determination needs to be made whether the libraries are archival or museums. GSA is not in the museum business," on 14 November 1979.

These views were definitely not in line with those of the White House or with those of NARS archivists who had been working closely with Hugh Carter. Since the creation of the NARS liaison office, Hugh Carter had dealt with its staff, even writing numerous personal letters to family members for the Carter oral history


36 Memo, Marty B. to Sonny [Hugh Carter], 4 February 1980, "Presidential Libraries - Senator Chiles' Bill," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL.
program. Weekly reports by liaison chief Marie Allen to her superiors at NARS were often also sent to Hugh Carter. It was no wonder, therefore, that, as the legislative struggle over presidential libraries developed, Rowland Freeman virtually disappeared from the record and the relationship between Hugh Carter and NARS archivists grew stronger.

On 11 March 1980, following the inconclusive talks between their staffs and the White House, Senators Chiles and Pryor introduced S. 2408, or the "Former Presidents Facilities and Services Reform Act," which was essentially the same as that proposed in December 1979. It called for an end to individual presidential libraries as of 20 January 1983 and called for the creation of a central facility to be built in phases, the first of which would house the archives of two presidents. Space per president would be based on a formula combining length of service and amount of square footage in existing libraries. The five percent additional area for archival exhibit space was also retained. If private persons or groups wanted to establish a library, the GSA administrator was authorized to provide technical assistance and to loan materials. Finally, historically significant records were to be duplicated and made available on request for a fee. A similar bill was introduced in the House of Representatives by Congressman Richardson Preyer (D-North Carolina).

Two days later, Hugh Carter began his efforts to alter, stall, or kill the legislation. His first step was to suggest to President Carter that he might discuss the act in a scheduled meeting with President Ford. In the spring, he received major supportive input from NARS and the GSA. In an elaborate report prepared

37 Letters, Hugh Carter to Carter family members, "Archives [2]," Box 4, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.

38 Memo, Hugh Carter to President Carter, 12 March 1980, "Former President's Act [1]," Box 30, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.
by Lawrence Cohan, GSA deputy assistant administrator for plans, programs, and financial management, comparing seven types of centralized and decentralized libraries, the conclusion was that a comparison of the base case with the centralized alternatives indicates that centralized alternatives cost from 110 million dollars (11 percent) to 147 million dollars (15 percent) more than the decentralized alternatives even though the centralized alternatives are 12,300 net square feet smaller per President. . . . The centralized alternatives with their relatively high investment costs . . . have the highest present value. In fact, centralized alternatives are seen to cost approximately three times as much as the decentralized alternatives.\(^9\)

A sensitivity analysis attached to the above plan showed that, to equal the cost of the current library program, a centralized, Washington, D. C. facility would require a thirty-five percent decrease in size for presidential libraries. In addition, staff would have to be reduced by fifteen persons per library to equal current costs and it would take two hundred years to reach equality of cost based on the higher investment costs for a centralized library.\(^40\) This was definitely something to combat the GAO study being used by Senator Chiles.

Archivist James O'Neill provided a detailed analysis of the Chiles Act. He pointed out that the Presidential Libraries Act of 1955 failed to provide safeguards to ensure that the libraries were built to archival standards or in convenient, accessible locations.

\(^9\) Copy of "Presidential Study Plans" in "Former Presidents Act [1]," Box 30, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.

\(^{40}\) Copy of "Sensitivity Analysis" for "Presidential Libraries Study" in "Presidential Libraries - General [14]," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL. (Sent to Hugh Carter, Veronica Pickman, and Michael Berman by Marvin Beaman.)
A centralized facility as proposed by Senator Chiles would neither satisfy scholarly and public needs nor be inexpensive to operate. Phased building of the libraries would create "honeycombed structures" and be difficult and costly to operate. The only feasible central site would be in Washington, where both expansion and minimum cost factors would be almost impossible to obtain. A centralized site outside Washington would be detrimental to obtaining the full cooperation of former presidents and might give the appearance of favoring one region of the country over another. Finally, S. 2408 called for a duplication policy which was already in place at NARS and the bill's effective date would divide the papers of a two-term Carter presidency.41

Richard Jacobs, acting assistant archivist for presidential libraries, also provided the White House with valuable input in an effort to present Congress with alternatives to Senator Chiles's proposals. His main suggestion was that the U.S. Code be amended to require GSA to provide a detailed set of standards for presidential archives. These standards would be based on a NARS model library of approximately 56,000 square feet and include such features as site accessibility, cost-effective operation, energy efficiency, adequate public and archival facilities, and compliance with fire safety and handicap accessibility regulations. A GSA report on standards should also include the archivist of the United States's evaluation. This alternative approach to S. 2408 was presented because of Jacobs's view that "it may be futile to make an effort to win over Chiles when efforts may be better spent attracting other members of the committee and committee

41 Copy of NARS analysis of Chiles's bill by James O'Neil; Marie Allen to Hugh Carter, 25 April 1980, "Former President's Act [1]," Box 30, SOA - Hugh Carter, JCL.
staffers to a realistic alternative." Jacobs went on to provide an introductory statement for a bill to amend the *U.S. Code* to require the "professionally established standards." He then offered a draft letter which supported a decentralized library system based on cost analysis and new *U.S. Code* standards and which was to be signed by Rowland Freeman and sent to Senator Abraham Ribicoff (D-Connecticut), chairman of the senate committee on governmental affairs.

Despite these activities, the White House realized the powerful nature of Chiles's argument for economy as well as its own awkward position, during an election year, in fighting against a law restricting excessive spending for ex-presidents. Nevertheless, support for the decentralized system was strong and clearly the view of top administration officials. In a White House document for Hugh Carter's staff, general statements declared the administration's full support for "legislation to reduce costs to the taxpayers in the area of Former Presidents," but expressed the view that an "election year is an inopportune time for the administration to present its position affirmatively on the substantive issue." In regard to the libraries, the "substantive issue" was centralization. The current system was to be supported

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44 Letter, Richard Jacobs to Marvin Beaman, 3 June 1980, "Presidential Libraries - General [4]," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL.
with certain modifications drawn from the GSA/NARS studies. These modifications included the end of split facilities such as the Ford Library/Museum, serious consideration of the NARS model library, building standards, and an acreage limitation. Decentralization was to be supported because it encouraged state and local support; promoted the donation of a president's personal and political papers as well as those of family, friends and associates; boosted regional pride; and made the records and educational/cultural activities inspired by the libraries more accessible to the nation as a whole.\textsuperscript{45}

Probably using these points, Hugh Carter's assistant Veronica Pickman worked to derail the Chiles legislation. In her contacts with congressional staffers, she increased the NARS model library figures to 88,000 square feet for a two-term president and attempted to get Senator Sam Nunn (D-Georgia) to use his influence in getting Chiles to postpone further action on his bill until after the election. Furthermore, she contacted the "LBJ people" to have a trustee of that library write Chiles (an LBJ library trustee himself) in support of the administration's position. She also sought Republican help from Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), who was a spokesman for Presidents Nixon and Ford, but who told Pickman that he preferred the Carter White House "out front" at this time.\textsuperscript{46} In early June, Pickman relayed a suggestion from White House aide Walker Nolan that Hugh Carter enlist the aid of Senators Nunn, Thomas Eagleton (D-Missouri), and John

\textsuperscript{45} Document titled "Talking Points" in "Presidential Libraries - General [14]," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL.

\textsuperscript{46} Handwritten notes, May 1980 (?), "Presidential Libraries - General [12]," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL.
Glenn (D-Ohio) in delaying the former presidents bill because it was "too controversial" to be acted upon precipitately. 47

Pickman also moved to forestall action on the House version of the bill introduced by Preyer. In a telephone conversation with Ed Gleiman, a professional staff member on Preyer's subcommittee on government information and individual rights, she received assurances that the Preyer bill was introduced as a "courtesy only" to Senator Chiles and that it would not even get through the four subcommittees to which it had been assigned. Gleiman also stated that Jack Brooks (D-Texas), the powerful chairman of the committee on government operations, did not like the bill and would not push it if the White House opposed it. 48

These delaying tactics were evidently proving to be successful and exasperating for the opposition. Ronald Chiodo, chief counsel, and Michael Hall, chief clerk, for two of Senator Chiles's subcommittees informed Walker Nolan that the White House was unresponsive and unwilling to negotiate on the libraries bill and was "in fact saying we don't want to do it this year and stuff it." Therefore, they were proceeding with plans to push the bill to mark-up, the process by which congressional committee members actually meet to handwrite any changes to the wording of a bill prior to voting. 49

47 Memo, Veronica Pickman to Hugh Carter, 3 June 1980, "Presidential Libraries - General [14]," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL.

48 Notes, Telephone conversation between Veronica Pickman and Ed Gleiman, 29 May 1980, "Presidential Libraries - General [14]," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL.

49 Memo, Veronica Pickman to Hugh Carter, 3 June 1980, "Presidential Libraries - General [14]," SOA - Pickman, JCL.
Shortly after this, Jamie Cowen, minority counsel for the Senate Subcommittee on Civil Service and General Services, began to plan an amendment sponsored by Senator Stevens. Cowen told Pickman that "if Chiles calls for a vote, Stevens has the votes to beat it."\(^{50}\) The amendment was duly presented in July and called for the retention of libraries at the local level. Restricting each president to one library, the size was to be based on existing facilities with an additional five percent for exhibits. All future libraries had to meet GSA specifications and would be limited to preservation, research, and restricted displays. Further, prior to accepting title, a library prospectus had to receive the approval of the House Committee on Government Operations and the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs. All additions to existing and future libraries would be from private funds.\(^{51}\)

As the Democratic convention approached, the White House efforts regarding the Former Presidents Act seemed to be succeeding. Nevertheless, Brian Walsh, staff member on Chiles's Subcommittee on Federal Spending Practices and Open Government, supported Stevens's proposals and hoped to work out the differences. Although Pickman failed to convince Walsh to postpone the bill until after the election, in memos to her boss, she began to express her confidence in winning Chiles over to the

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\(^{51}\) Copy of "Senator Stevens' Amendment to S2408" in "Presidential Libraries - General [11]," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL.
decentralized approach.52 She, indeed, felt confident enough at this point to reject an offer from Senator James Sasser (D-Tennessee) to seek Senator Nunn's support against Chiles, stating, "I doubt that will be necessary--the Stevens compromise isn't that far from our position."53

By the end of July, the White House seemed to be firmly in control. When NARS archivist Richard Jacobs offered to discuss the Stevens/Chiles compromise with the senators, Pickman told him to delay and to reject the 45,000 square feet compromise figure as too small. Stevens's staffer Jamie Cowen told Pickman that the Alaska senator "will not block any efforts we make to slow its [Chiles's bill] progress." Stevens himself had requested that no mark-up be scheduled before 9 September 1980, and Pickman concluded that "time is definitely on our side."54

At least for the issue of presidential libraries, this was certainly true. The Former Presidents Facilities and Services Reform Act of 1980 became lost in the presidential campaign activities and in the other legislation to be acted on before the Ninety-sixth Congress could adjourn. The 1980 Chiles bill, however, was not totally bereft of results. In a November 1980 report to Hugh

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53 Memo, Pickman to Hugh Carter, 7 August 1980, "Presidential Libraries - General [14]," Box 13, SOA - Pickman, JCL.

Carter, NARS's James O'Neill cautioned that, in planning for a future presidential library, the president needed to avoid building an "architecturally imposing edifice" at the expense of proper standards for an archival structure. Also important in planning was that "all parties involved recognize that the archival, research, and exhibit functions are the raison d'etat [sic] for the institution," and that without these basic functions, "the library will lose its credibility in whatever else it tries to accomplish."

It seems obvious that the public, political, and governmental dialogue about presidential libraries during the administration of Jimmy Carter was pivotal to settling the issues of ownership, accessibility, and centralization. Although no major legislation resulted from the centralization debate, the primary issue was exhaustively researched by GAO, GSA, and NARS; the results reviewed and discussed by the White House and Congress; and an agreement reached on the necessity for cost cutting regulations and for the imposition of building standards in any continuation of the decentralized system.

Some of the many issues raised by the Chiles legislation had been the concerns of archivists and scholars for several decades. As in any political discussion, it was not conducted in a vacuum. The libraries were a small part of a much larger debate over the role of the president and former president in twentieth century American society. Fears of an imperial president who could abuse his powers were very real and a potent factor in congressional minds. Added to this was the fact that Jimmy Carter was not as politically powerful as his predecessors and was weakened by an unhealthy economy and disasters in foreign affairs, such as Iran.

Despite these handicaps, the White House staff led by Hugh Carter proved very effective. Facts and figures were marshalled

to refute the expenditure reports used by Senator Chiles. Alternative cost saving proposals were presented to deflect criticism of the decentralized system. The Republican minority was used to offer a major amendment, while the support of other senators, congressmen, and the, at times, all-important congressional staffers was sought for the administration's position. The result was that Senator Chiles was successfully outmanuevered. But the White House dealt with the potentially embarrassing situation of the NARS "revolution" by decisively siding with the GSA.

This evaluation, however, should not imply that the creation of imposing monuments to American presidents in the form of presidential libraries is desirable. That the libraries perform an excellent service by preserving presidential materials and making them available to the public is true, but it is still difficult to deny the Chiles's argument that they also tend to glorify the individual president, at least in the public mind. The money spent on nonarchival construction and maintenance might be much better spent on funding research, grants, conferences, scholarships, and archival staffing. In so doing, the knowledge of the Emersonian "There and Then" would be used for the benefit of each individual American who sought to make history "Here and Now."

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