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Subject: Letters to Professional Associations

Tom Samboia has prepared the following draft of a letter that might be sent on behalf of a professional association in support of an extension. Dear Chairman/Senator/Congressman: We are writing to you to offer our support for a one year extension of the Assassination Records Review Board, the independent federal board responsible for overseeing the identification and release of all records related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Allowing the Board to complete its work is a matter of great importance to the historical community and the American public. The historical community supported passage of The President John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (JFK Act). The Act, which created the Assassination Records Review Board, was a significant and extraordinary law aimed at shedding light on one of the most important events in recent US history. The secrecy surrounding the assassination and subsequent government investigations made the creation of the Review Board a critical step in allowing the American public and historians access to relevant records to better understand this important chapter in our history. Beyond the basic need for full disclosure of records on the assassination, and perhaps more important to the historical profession, the JFK Act set a precedent for the efficient and effective declassification of other federal records in the future. For example, the Review Board has broken important new ground in dealing with intelligence agency records in a responsible manner. CIA records declassified by the Board have provided the historical community and the public with a significant glimpse at the operations of the CIA. Overall, the Review Board's efforts within the framework of the JFK Act should serve as a model for declassification in other areas. The Review Board's mandate to oversee the release of the remaining records related to the assassination of President Kennedy has been unprecedented, as well as overwhelming. Because such a task with this volume of records (approximately three million pages in the JFK Collection by the end of 1996) had never been undertaken by the federal government, by the Congress miscalculated in setting a time frame for the completion of the Board's work. A extended startup period necessitated by the need to find adequate offices for the storage of classified records and to acquire security clearances for its staff, an 18 month delay in the appointment of Board members, as well as inherent difficulties in getting federal agencies to understand and meet their obligations under the JFK Act, have resulted in the need for the Board's tenure to be extended for one year. As we understand it, the additional year will allow the Board to process important CIA and FBI records, as well as those of other federal agencies. We respectfully request your support for an extension of the Review Board for one year. An early termination of the Review Board would obscure much of the its important work and represent a setback for efforts to broaden access to important government records. In

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