

Why won't the Board be Finished by the End of FY 97?

•***Delay in the appointment of the Board*** -- The Board was not appointed until 18 months after the legislation was signed into law. Federal agencies were left to define for themselves the universe of records that should be processed under the Act and to speculate about the kind of evidence that would be needed to sustain the redaction of assassination-related information. Unfortunately, once the Review Board was in place, agencies needed to revise a considerable amount of work. In fact, many agencies have yet to complete their review.

•***Prolonged Start-up*** -- In an effort to create a truly independent agency, Congress imposed several restrictions on the manner in which the Review Board could operate. Unlike other temporary agencies, the Review Board could not hire or detail experienced federal employees, but rather had to hire new employees who had to undergo background investigations and be cleared at the Top Secret level. In addition, the Review Board had to locate and renovate space that was suitable for the storage of classified material. All of these administrative tasks stole valuable time from the allotted three years. As a result, the Board could not begin an effective review of records until the third quarter of its first year.

•***Complexity of Process*** -- The JFK Act properly affords the agencies the opportunity to provide evidence to the Review Board in support of recommended postponements. The Review Board believes that, in order to protect important national security secrets and safety concerns for informants and agents, the agencies need to have every reasonable opportunity to present evidence to the Review Board about the importance of redacted information. This process, which is an important component of the JFK Act, has been extremely time consuming for both the agencies and the Review Board. Although the Review Board could have acted much more swiftly by not affording the agencies the opportunity to collect and provide evidence, the Review Board would have thereby neglected its duties to make informed judgments.

•***Number of Records*** -- No one anticipated the number of records and the number of proposed redactions that would be requested.