

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE RECORDS OF CONGRESS**

**MEETING #66**

**Tuesday, October 29, 2024**

**2:00 – 3:00 PM**

**Meeting on WebEx**

**Members of the Committee present:**

Ann Berry, Secretary of the U.S. Senate and Chair of the Committee

Kevin McCumber, Acting Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives and Co-Chair of the Committee

Colleen Shogan, Archivist of the United States

Katherine Scott, Historian of the U.S. Senate

Matthew Wasniewski, Historian of the U.S. House of Representatives

Danna Bell, Educational Resource Specialist, Library of Congress

Denise Hibay, Director of Collections and Research in the New York Public Library

Debbie Ramsey, Curator of the McConnell – Chao Archives at the University of Louisville

Tanya Marshall, Vermont State Archivist and Chief Records Officer

Norman Ornstein, Senior Fellow Emeritus at the American Enterprise Institute

Gunter Waibel, Associate Vice Provost and Executive Director, California Digital Library at the University of California

**Others present for all or a portion of the meeting were:**

Karen Paul, Archivist of the U.S. Senate

Heather Bourk, Archivist of the U.S. House of Representatives

Richard Hunt, Director of the Center for Legislative Archives (NARA)

**Secretary Ann Berry:** Welcome to the 66th meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress.

I would like to thank my co-chair, the Honorable Kevin McCumber, the Archivist of the United States Colleen Shogan, and our committee members for joining us today.

Two of our current Advisory Committee members, who were present at the committee's founding in 1990, have recently announced their retirements. Their individual contributions to the field of congressional records management, to Congress, and to future generations, deserve recognition, and I'd like to take a few moments to express my appreciation to Karen Paul, and later, the Archivist of the United States will recognize Richard Hunt.

It was in 1982 when the National Archives loaned Karen Paul to the Senate Historical Office. She was tasked with taking charge of Senate records to be transferred to the Archives. But first, she had to figure out where all the records were. There had never been a congressional archivist on the Hill, and there were no models for managing exclusively legislative records.

Karen soon became indispensable in helping to fulfill the Senate Historical Office's mission to preserve and promote the history of the institution. In 1984, Senate Historian Richard Baker made her a permanent member of the team.

In addition to the transfer of committee records, as required by statute and Senate rules, Karen advised senators about how, where, and when to archive their voluminous paper collections. Back then, they were all paper.

She authored two guides: one for Members' records and another for committees. Handbooks that have since been revised numerous times and now serve as the standard for legislative records management at repositories across the country.

For decades, Karen was the only archivist on the Hill. A trailblazer, in every sense of the word. As the founder of the Congressional Papers Roundtable, she helped to build a community of congressional papers experts within the Society of American Archivists.

She has edited books and authored articles, and was a co-founder with Richard Hunt and others of the Advisory Committee in 1990. More recently, Karen has focused on developing strategies and policies to address the challenges of electronic records management. Karen's diplomatic and practical approach to archiving has been particularly effective when persuading reluctant staff and Members of the necessity and value of archiving their materials.

Karen has served as the chief archival advisor for twelve secretaries of the Senate and four Senate historians. She has mentored congressional record archivists and helped them secure positions on committees and within Member offices and at repositories around the country. Under her careful stewardship, the Historical Office archival team has grown to include four deputy archivists. The Senate community is indebted to Karen for her decades of dedication to congressional archiving.

Her retirement at the end of January will conclude nearly 43 years of Senate service. I wish her and her husband Michael every happiness together as they begin this new chapter of their lives. Thank you, Karen. And now I would like to recognize the co-chairman, Kevin McCumber.

**Kevin McCumber:** Thank you, Ann. It's been a pleasure co-chairing the Advisory Committee with you and working collaboratively on shared projects throughout the Congress. Hello everyone and thank you to the staff in the Senate Historical Office for planning and hosting today's meeting. Welcome to members of the Advisory Committee and thank you for your support and interest in preserving congressional records.

Throughout its history, the Advisory Committee has successfully addressed a number of records management, preservation, and access challenges specific to congressional records. From its inception, the Advisory Committee sought to professionalize the management of Congress's records, establishing an initial five-year plan to address preservation, reference services, electronic records, educational outreach, and the recommendation of additional resources for the House, Senate, and Center for Legislative Archives to support the congressional records program. It had the foresight to identify emerging challenges that would impact congressional record keeping, such as the expanded use of congressional records, demand for increased online access to House and Senate records, and the management and preservation of web content and social media.

I'd like to quickly reflect on the Advisory Committee's work over the past three-plus decades by highlighting a few of the key projects it recommended and supported: the expansion of professional staff at the House, Senate, and Center; implementation of the Congressional Records Instance of NARA's Electronic Records Archive for storage of House and Senate electronic records; securing and constructing additional congressional records storage space at the Government Publishing Office; and improved description and access to House and Senate records resulting from the work of the Next Generation Finding Aid Task Force and Legislative Enhanced Archival Description Project.

On the occasion of their upcoming retirements, I, too, want to acknowledge and thank both Karen Paul and Richard Hunt for their years of dedicated service to the Advisory Committee, their respective institutions, and the archival profession. With over 70 years of combined work at the Senate and Center, not to mention lifetime ACRC membership, thank you, both, for your unparalleled commitment to managing and preserving congressional records and advocating for their use, and for training and mentoring the next generation of congressional archivists. Your dedication to preserving the history of representative government will be missed. Congratulations to you both on a job well done.

Wrapping up, I'd also like to thank the current and former Advisory Committee members for their thoughtful guidance on issues facing the congressional records community and their support in achieving the group's notable successes. Thank you for your expertise and dedication

to our shared goal of preserving congressional records and history. I look forward to continued collaboration with our partners at the Senate and NARA and adding to our collective successes in preserving and providing access to Congress's records. Thank you.

**Ann Berry:** Thank you, Kevin. And now we will hear from Dr. Shogan.

**Colleen Shogan:** Thank you, Ann and Kevin. It's good to see everyone here, and I'm glad we were able to fit this meeting in before the end of the year. I know everybody's schedules are very busy, so I will be brief, but thank you for your efforts. First, I want to acknowledge how helpful this committee has been over the last 34 years in guiding and supporting our work to collectively protect, preserve, and share the records of Congress.

As a political scientist, I could go on for hours about how important legislative records are to understanding our history and our democracy. I love this part of my job that allows me to work with Congress and fulfill its mission. As the Archivist of the United States, I can guarantee that the National Archives will treat the legislative archives with the respect and the care that they deserve, which brings me to Richard. As the Secretary noted, he is retiring in December after 35 years of federal service. He's attended every one of these Advisory Committee meetings, and rumor has it he was even the note taker at the first meeting in 1991.

Richard has been a tremendous asset to the National Archives, and I know he has been a great friend and partner to both the House and the Senate. His leadership at the Center for Legislative Archives has been extraordinary. He sustained and nurtured our relationship with Congress, fostered a rich community of legislative record archivists, and with his commitment to outreach and education, he has significantly furthered public understanding of Congress and our legislative processes. So, our next director has very big shoes to fill.

I can tell you, though, that I'm ambitious in this regard, and if possible, I would like the National Archives to do even more with the legislative archives. We have a great partnership with your offices, and I think we can, and we should, use the records to help Members, staff, and the public better understand and appreciate the rich history of Congress and, of course, of our nation.

Finally, I'd like to add my congratulations to Karen Paul, also, on her remarkable career. As the Secretary noted, her extensive expertise and dedication have been absolutely essential to preserving and protecting the history of the United States Senate.

Richard and Karen, I promise you both that we will continue to build upon your significant accomplishments from both of your careers. Thank you for your public service.

**Ann Berry:** Thank you, Dr. Shogan. I think everybody will agree with that last statement.

I'd like to make a motion to approve our minutes from the last meeting.

Do I have a second?

**Kate Scott:** I second.

**Ann Berry:** A second— Is that you, Kate? OK, thank you.

Is there any other new business that anyone would like to talk about?

There is one thing I would like to provide—some new information in regards to the ACRC--the sunset update. Thirty-three years ago, the Advisory Committee was established and tasked with three objectives: to develop a five-year plan related to the archiving of congressional records; to receive advice from experts about establishing and ensuring access to historical congressional records; and to establish professional records management teams in the Center for Legislative Archives, the House, and the Senate, and encourage consistent collaboration among them.

More than three decades later, I am delighted to report that the Advisory Committee has succeeded in accomplishing each of these initial goals. This success has prompted conversations among stakeholders about the best way to address congressional records management challenges in the 21st century and beyond, culminating with the proposed restructuring of the Advisory Committee.

Legislation has been drafted by partners in the House and the Senate, and was approved by the Committee on House Administration and the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs in September.

This bill would sunset the Advisory Committee and create a new advisory structure comprised of the three institutional principals: the Secretary of the Senate, the Clerk of the House of Representatives, and the Archivist of the United States.

Should the bill to sunset the Advisory Committee pass in the 118th Congress, the Advisory Committee would be disbanded in 60 days. The preservation and accessibility of Congressional records remain important to me.

I believe that this new structure will allow me and my successors to continue to address current issues in congressional records management with our institutional partners in meaningful ways. As we wrap up, I'd like to thank members of the Advisory Committee for their continued advocacy for the preservation of the nation's congressional records. Regardless of the outcome of the sunset bill, I will be in touch to provide further updates and next steps. So, thank you all for making this come true.

Are there any other concerns or business?

**Kate Scott:** Maybe just a round of applause for Karen and Richard, the founders—the co-founders and so much appreciation for their dedication to this project over the course of their careers. We're so indebted to you.

(Applause.)

**Ann Berry:** Absolutely. And Karen, you know, I go way back too and I remember when you started.

**Karen Paul:** Well, you stole some of my thoughts. I was going to say that I served under twelve secretaries of the Senate and four historians and worked with three Center directors over the years. So, I think that's some kind of record, don't you?

**Ann Berry:** Absolutely.

**Karen Paul:** I just want to say it's been an honor and a privilege and really a pleasure. And I guess I'm somewhat—well, I'm not somewhat—but I am of Puritan descent. And I have to say that my life has been blessed because not only did I have a career that was thoroughly engaging and worthwhile of a career worth living, but I got to have a calling. And to a Puritan, that's really something.

**Ann Berry:** So, well, congratulations once again.

**Richard Hunt:** As a fellow New Englander, I will harken to that same thought, that it's been an honor and a privilege to work with all of you and this committee in service to the House and the

Senate. And providing these services and record services to the United States Congress has really been the critical mission of my career. So, I take great personal pride in all we've accomplished over the past three decades. And I'll end with one thought, which is: timing is critical in any career. And for me, I had the good fortune at the very start of my career to be mentored by Dick Baker, the first Senate Historian, by Ray Smock, the first House Historian, and Mike Gillette, who was the first director of the Center when it was transformed into a full-service archive for the records of Congress. So, I was blessed with the great leadership and support of those three and, subsequently, by all of you. You've made my career much easier and much more successful, and I thank you all.

**Ann Berry:** I would like to say thank you both for starting something 30 years ago. Who would have ever thought how far we've come? So, thanks to both of you again.

On that note, are there any other concerns or business? If not, I ask for a motion to adjourn.

**Colleen Shogan:** So moved.

**Ann Berry:** Okay, very good. Thank you so very much. Bye-bye now.