

**Statement of Congressman Patrick McHenry**  
**Ranking Member**

Subcommittee on Information Policy, Census, and National Archives  
*“Stakeholders’ Views on the National Archives and Records  
Administration (NARA)”*

May 21, 2009

The National Archives is an agency with an extremely important function. The archiving of our government’s valuable records requires a methodical approach to guarantee the preservation of documents with continuing value to the American people. Some of these records contain highly sensitive information, and these records must be secured to protect national security and personally-identifiable information. The effectiveness of the Archives as protector of the records under its control is a piece of the national security puzzle.

This is why I am so troubled by a pattern of careless handling of sensitive material by the Archives. This week, the Inspector General of the Archives described a potentially catastrophic loss of data to our Committee’s staff. The Inspector General, with the assistance of the Justice Department and the Secret Service, is currently investigating the loss of a hard drive containing one terabyte of data derived from records from the Clinton presidency that went missing from the Archives’ College Park facility. One terabyte of data is the approximate equivalent of several million books.

Data on the drive includes more than 100,000 social security numbers, contact information and home addresses for various Clinton administration officials, Secret Service and White House operating procedures, event logs, social gathering logs, political records and other highly-sensitive information. The full extent of the contents of the drive is still being investigated. The IG characterized the violation as “the greatest loss ever and troubling and amazing.”

The IG described for us an environment at the College Park facility where hundreds of employees have access to sensitive data; where janitors, visitors, interns and others with no clearance are able to walk through areas where hard drives containing national secrets are just lying around. In fact, Archives employees use the area where the hard drive was left as a shortcut to the bathroom. The door to that room is left open because the room gets too hot.

This incident would be troubling if it was isolated, but it is even more alarming because it is part of a pattern. All you have to do is read the reports released by the IG over the last few years to see that the loss of this hard drive is just the latest example of carelessness at the Archives. Archives employees were accidentally or intentionally throwing away original Bureau of Indian Affairs records so frequently that a rule was put in place that required security officers and janitors to check the trash before taking it out to the dumpster. These records are

irreplaceable and they were being thrown in the trash by Archives personnel.

The failures of Archives security protocols are seemingly endless. In 2007, an annual inventory identified as missing approximately 559 equipment items with memory storage capability and the potential for storing sensitive personal identifying information. A report published in 2006 revealed the CIA and other federal agencies had to re-classify over 55,000 pages of records taken from the open shelves at the Archives. In 2005, President Clinton's former National Security Advisor Sandy Berger pled guilty to unlawfully removing documents from the Archives.

Yesterday, the Partnership for Public Service and American University's Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation (ISPPPI) released their report of best and worst places to work in the federal government for 2009. Unsurprisingly, the National Archives and Records Administration ranked 29 out of 30 overall. In the categories of Leaders, Supervisors, and Strategic Management, the Archives ranked a paltry 22, 20, and 21, respectively.

Acting Archivist Adrienne Thomas was invited to appear today but she declined. Ms. Thomas decided that her presence at a ribbon-cutting ceremony was of far greater importance. Her failure to grasp the gravity of the situation is shocking. She certainly has some explaining to do.

And there are immediate questions that she needed to be here today to answer. Has an inventory been done to determine if any other records are missing? What immediate security measures have been taken to prevent further loss or theft?

Given the pattern of mismanagement and carelessness at the National Archives, I look forward to working with Chairman Clay to schedule a hearing with Ms. Thomas as soon as possible. She must be given the opportunity to account for her negligence and Congress must fulfill its obligation to provide meaningful oversight of the National Archives.

We are here today to discuss what qualifications President Obama should look for when he names a new Archivist. It is clear that a replacement for Ms. Thomas cannot be named soon enough. The input of professionals from the Archives would be helpful but there is not a single representative from the Archives present.

I thank the witnesses for appearing and I only wish they were joined by the people we most needed to hear from today.