

December 17, 2008 final version for approval

Dear Obama Transition Team (insert name):

As we are sure you are aware, Dr. Allen Weinstein, the Archivist of the United States, recently announced his resignation from his office effective December 19, 2008. On behalf of the four largest archival organizations in the United States, of ARMA, International (the nation's largest organization of records management professionals), and of the National Coalition for History, we write to share our thoughts regarding the qualifications that we believe are essential in the person whom President-Elect Obama will appoint to replace Dr. Weinstein.

In the speech that he delivered on the evening of his election, President-Elect Obama spoke eloquently of the true strength of our nation: "... the enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity, and unyielding hope." He added that, "Our stories are singular, but our destiny is shared."

Our stories are preserved and our destiny is recorded in the archives of the United States. It is within the archives that we document our democracy, our liberty, our opportunities and, most importantly, the hope of our nation's people. The Archivist of the United States is among the most senior individuals in the archives profession. He or she is invested with many legal obligations, but perhaps most importantly with the moral responsibility to see that this great mission of preserving and remembering our nation's history is accomplished in a way from which our citizens can and will learn.

Because the mission of recording and remembering is of such importance – not only for our generation but for those who will follow us – we believe a person of character and wisdom, whose decisions are made with a firm knowledge of archives, records management, and history, should be nominated as the next Archivist of the United States.

We hope that the thoughts attached to this letter ("A New Archivist of the United States: Qualities of a Successful Candidate") will help guide you in selecting the person whom President-elect Obama will nominate. Each of our organizations, individually and collectively, would be pleased to offer any assistance that might help inform your discussion of this most important appointment.

Sincerely,

Frank Boles
President, Society of American Archivists

David Haury
President, Council of State Archivists

Tracey Berezansky
President, National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators

Martin Levitt
President, Academy of Certified Archivists

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President, ARMA, International

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National Coalition for History