

formation about routine developments. A report by the House Committee on Government Operations lists 44 cases of Executive Branch officials refusing information on the basis of the principles set forth in President Eisenhower's letter.

President Kennedy carefully qualified use of the claim of "executive privilege". In a letter of February 8, 1962 refusing information to a Senate Subcommittee, he stated that the "principle which is at stake here cannot be automatically applied to every request for information." Later, President Kennedy clarified his position on the claim of "executive privilege", stating that—

"... this Administration has gone to great lengths to achieve full cooperation with the Congress in making available to it all appropriate documents, correspondence and information. That is the basic policy of this Administration, and it will continue to be so. Executive privilege can be invoked only by the President and will not be used without specific Presidential approval."

As a result of President Kennedy's clear statement, there was no longer a rash of "executive privilege" claims to withhold information from the Congress and the public. I am confident you share my views on the importance to our form of government of a free flow of information, and I hope you will reaffirm the principle that "executive privilege" can be invoked by you alone and will not be used without your specific approval.

Sincerely,

JOHN E. MOSS, *Chairman.*

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
Washington, April 2, 1965.

HON. JOHN E. MOSS,  
*Chairman, Foreign Operations and Government  
Information Subcommittee of the  
Committee on Government Operations,  
House Office Building,  
Washington, D.C.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I have your recent letter discussing the use of the claim of "executive privilege" in connection with Congressional requests for documents and other information.

Since assuming the Presidency, I have followed the policy laid down by President Kennedy in his letter to you of March 7, 1962, dealing with this subject. Thus, the claim of "executive privilege" will continue to be made only by the President.

This administration has attempted to cooperate completely with the Congress in making available to it all information possible, and that will continue to be our policy.

I appreciate the time and energy that you and your Subcommittee have devoted to this subject and welcome the opportunity to state formally my policy on this important subject.

Sincerely,

(s) LYNDON B. JOHNSON.

FOREIGN OPERATIONS AND GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SUBCOMMITTEE,  
OF THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,  
Washington, D.C., January 28, 1969.

HON. RICHARD M. NIXON,  
*President of the United States,  
The White House,  
Washington, D.C.*

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: The claim of "executive privilege" as authority to withhold government information has long been of concern to those of us who support the principle that the survival of a representative government depends on an electorate and a Congress that are well informed.

As you know, some administrations in the past made it a practice to pass along to Executive branch subordinates a discretionary authority to claim "executive privilege" as a basis to refuse information to the Congress. The practice of delegating this grave Presidential responsibility was ended by President John F. Kennedy when he restored a policy similar to that which existed under previous strong administrations, including those of Presidents

George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt. In a letter to the Foreign Operations and Government Information Subcommittee, dated March 7, 1962, he enunciated the policy as follows:

"... this Administration has gone to great lengths to achieve full cooperation with the Congress in making available to it all appropriate documents, correspondence and information. That is the basic policy of this Administration, and it will continue to be so. Executive privilege can be invoked only by the President and will not be used without specific Presidential approval."

President Lyndon B. Johnson informed the Subcommittee by letter, dated April 2, 1965, he would continue the policy enunciated by President Kennedy. He stated:

"Since assuming the Presidency, I have followed the policy laid down by President Kennedy in his letter to you of March 7, 1962, dealing with this subject. Thus, the claim of 'executive privilege' will continue to be made only by the President."

In view of the urgent need to safeguard and maintain a free flow of information to the Congress, I hope you will favorably consider a reaffirmation of the policy which provides, in essence, that the claim of "executive privilege" will be invoked only by the President.

Sincerely,

(s) JOHN E. MOSS, *Chairman.*

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
Washington, April 7, 1969.

Hon. JOHN E. MOSS,  
*Chairman, Foreign Operations and Government Information Subcommittee,*  
*House of Representatives,*  
*Washington, D.C.*

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Knowing of your interest, I am sending you a copy of a memorandum I have issued to the heads of executive departments and agencies spelling out the procedural steps to govern the invocation of "executive privilege" under this Administration.

As you well know, the claim of executive privilege has been the subject of much debate since George Washington first declared that a Chief Executive must "exercise a discretion."

I believe, and I have stated earlier, that the scope of executive privilege must be very narrowly construed. Under this Administration, executive privilege will not be asserted without specific Presidential approval.

I want to take this opportunity to assure you and your committee that this Administration is dedicated to insuring a free flow of information to the Congress and the news media—and, thus, to the citizens. You are, I am sure, familiar with the statement I made on this subject during the campaign. Now that I have the responsibility to implement this pledge, I wish to reaffirm my intent to do so. I want open government to be a reality in every way possible.

This Administration has already given a positive emphasis to freedom of information. I am committed to ensuring that both the letter and spirit of the Public Records Law will be implemented throughout the Executive Branch of the government.

With my best wishes.

Sincerely,

(s) RICHARD NIXON.

MARCH 24, 1969.

#### MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

(Establishing a Procedure to Govern Compliance with  
Congressional Demands for Information)

The policy of this Administration is to comply to the fullest extent possible with Congressional requests for information. While the Executive branch has the responsibility of withholding certain information the disclosure of which would be incompatible with the public interest, this Administration will invoke this authority only in the most compelling circumstances and after a rigorous inquiry into the actual need for its exercise. For those reasons Executive