

The Presidential Records Act, NARA, & Trump vs. Obama

How fact checkers and CNN are lying to you, and what you need to know

By ChatGPT

Sf. R. Careaga, BSEE, MSTOM
May 2023

ABSTRACT

This is a straightforward paper. The author wanted to fact-check the claims by CNN that Trump took records against the PRA, as if it was unusual, and then online all the “Fact check triangle” outlets claimed Trump was delusional about the 30 million records and lied about Obama taking them. So the author started with simple unbiased prompts from ChatGPT 3.5, and found a strange claim that contradicted memories from 2016-2017. So the author went to DuckDuckGo.com and used the search term “2017 news Obama took records with him as he left office -fact -check” and found an article **by CNN** that completely contradicts the fact-checker claims, as NARA is not located in Chicago, but in Washington D.C. Indeed, Obama did take records and they are in the Obama Presidential Library in Chicago, as per CNN.¹

Keywords: US Constitutional Amendments - corporations - Clear and Present Danger - platforms - Freedom

¹ [White House starts moving Obama's records to Chicago | CNN Politics](#) (2016)

Chat GPT 3.5 Answers

Summarize the Presidential Records Act

The Presidential Records Act (PRA) is a United States federal law that governs the management and preservation of presidential records. Enacted in 1978, the PRA was designed to ensure the accountability, transparency, and preservation of records created or received by the President and his or her staff during their time in office. Here are the key points of the Presidential Records Act:

1. **Scope of Records:** The PRA covers all documentary materials, including electronic records, created or received by the President and his or her staff in the course of conducting official business.
2. **Ownership and Custody:** The PRA declares that the records belong to the American people and should be administered by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) upon the conclusion of a President's term.
3. **Access and Restrictions:** The PRA establishes a general presumption of public access to presidential records, but it also allows for specific restrictions to be placed on certain sensitive information, such as national security, personal privacy, and confidential advice.
4. **Transition Period:** The PRA requires that during the transition period between presidential administrations, the incumbent President must take all necessary steps to ensure the preservation of records and facilitate an orderly transfer of the records to the next administration.
5. **Preservation and Disposal:** The PRA mandates that presidential records be preserved and maintained by NARA. It prohibits the President or his or her representatives from disposing of or destroying records without the approval of the Archivist of the United States.
6. **Disclosure and Review Process:** The PRA sets up a process for the review and release of presidential records. It establishes timeframes for disclosure and allows for the involvement of the former and incumbent Presidents, as well as other affected parties, in the review process.
7. **Enforcement:** The PRA grants NARA the authority to enforce compliance with its provisions, including taking legal action if necessary.

Overall, the Presidential Records Act ensures that the records generated by U.S. Presidents are preserved for historical and governmental purposes and that the public has access to most of these records while protecting sensitive information.

[OK, good to know, this saves me a lot of time and reading. Great!]

Isn't it true that every President has used PRA since its inception to keep secret and top secret documents, and records, for the purposes of remaining part of the Executive Branch after leaving office?

While it is true that Presidents have utilized certain provisions of the Presidential Records Act (PRA) to protect sensitive information, it is important to note that the act does not specifically authorize the withholding of records to maintain secrecy or remain part of the Executive Branch after leaving office. The PRA acknowledges that there may be legitimate reasons for restricting access to certain records, such as national security concerns, personal privacy, or confidential advice. However, it also establishes a presumption of public access to presidential records.

Under the PRA, restrictions on access to records must be justified, and there are specific procedures in place to determine the validity and duration of such restrictions. The Archivist of the United States, in consultation with the former and incumbent Presidents, reviews records and determines which restrictions are warranted. The PRA also allows for legal challenges to access restrictions.

While it is possible that some Presidents have sought to maintain the confidentiality of certain records using the PRA, the act does not grant unlimited authority to withhold information. It seeks to strike a balance between transparency and the need to protect sensitive information. The PRA is subject to interpretation and implementation, and its application can vary depending on specific circumstances and the judgments made by the Archivist and other parties involved.

[This is a strange amount of text to answer the question, as if the AI has been trained on this topic.]

Can you name any presidents that did not take records with them?

There have been presidents who have chosen not to take their records with them upon leaving office, instead following the customary practice of leaving them for preservation and management by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Here are a few examples of presidents who did not take records with them:

1. George Washington: As the first President of the United States, George Washington did not take his records with him when he left office in 1797. At that time, the concept of presidential records and the PRA did not exist, but Washington ensured that his official papers were carefully preserved.
2. Thomas Jefferson: Thomas Jefferson, the third President, also left his records behind when he retired from office in 1809. He sold his extensive personal library to the U.S. government, which formed the foundation of the Library of Congress.
3. Abraham Lincoln: Although Abraham Lincoln's presidency ended tragically with his assassination in 1865, his records were subsequently transferred to the custody of the Department of State, where they were preserved and managed.
4. Barack Obama: In accordance with the PRA, Barack Obama did not take his records with him upon the conclusion of his presidency in 2017. Instead, his records were transferred to NARA for preservation and eventual public access.

These examples demonstrate that various presidents have followed the practice of leaving their records behind for proper archiving and preservation, in line with the principles of historical transparency and accountability.

[Setting aside the weird comparison made to Mt. Rushmore level Presidents, The Obama narrative here just didn't fit what Trump claimed, or what I recall myself from the era, having lived through it. So I stopped prompting and went to DuckDuckGo.com I had to add -fact-check because of the plethora of 2023 articles in the last 2 days trying to work overtime to make people believe that Trump is a liar. Even still the results looked *more than a bit hair-raisingly biased.*]

 [https://apnews.com > article > fact-check-obama-million-documents-929954890662](https://apnews.com/article/fact-check-obama-million-documents-929954890662)

Obama didn't keep millions of classified White House documents

Aug 12, 2022 · Trump posted on Truth Social, the social network he founded, on Friday. "**OBAMA TOOK 30 Million Documents** when he **left** the **WHITEHOUSE** and **No FBI RAID**," read one tweet posted Tuesday, the day after the FBI's search, that had garnered almost 20,000 likes by Friday. But these **records** were given to NARA in **2017**, upon the end of **Obama's** term ...

 [https://www.factcheck.org > 2017 > 09 > obamas-final-numbers](https://www.factcheck.org/2017/09/obamas-final-numbers)

Obama's Final Numbers - FactCheck.org

When **Obama left office** in January **2017**, there were still 5.6 million openings, an increase of 105% above the month he **took office**. ... setting more **new annual records** in 2012 and 2014, when they ...

 [https://www.msn.com > en-us > news > us > fact-check-archives-agency-transferred-30-million-un...](https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/fact-check-archives-agency-transferred-30-million-un...)


Fact check: Archives agency transferred 30 million unclassified Oba...

Oct 3, 2022 · The archives agency said in an Aug. 12 statement that they "assumed exclusive legal and physical custody" of **Obama's presidential records** when he **left office** in **2017** as part of the Presidential ...

 [https://octoldit.com > exclusive-national-archives-and-media-caught-in-another-lie-evidence-sho...](https://octoldit.com/exclusive-national-archives-and-media-caught-in-another-lie-evidence-sho...)

Evidence shows Obama Did have Classified Docs in the 33 Million Pa...

Aug 15, 2022 · **EXCLUSIVE: National Archives and Media Caught in Another Lie - Evidence Shows Obama Did Have Classified Docs in the 33 Million Pages He Took with Him When He Left Office.** The establishment media is now insisting that Barack Hussein **Obama** did not keep classified documents and take them with him after he **left** the White House.

 <https://people.com › politics › fact-check-did-barack-obama-illegally-take-30-million-pages-class...>


Did Obama Illegally Take 30 Million Pages of Documents to Chicago?

Aug 12, 2022 · **Obama's** now getting quite a few mentions as well. After The **New** York Post published an opinion piece, which claimed **Obama** sent 30 million pages of his administration's **records** to Chicago when he ...

 <https://www.cbsnews.com › news › obama-administration-spent-36m-on-records-lawsuits-last-y...>

Obama admin spent \$36M on lawsuits to keep info secret - CBS News

Updated on: March 14, **2017** / 8:06 AM / AP. WASHINGTON -- The **Obama** administration in its final year in **office** spent a **record** \$36.2 million on legal costs defending its refusal to turn over federal ...

 <https://www.verifythis.com › article › news › verify › government-verify › fact-check-trump-claim-...>

Trump's claim about missing Obama records is false | verifythis.com

Aug 16, 2022 · The National Archives and **Records** Administration (NARA) debunked Trump's claims in a statement on Aug. 12, writing that it "assumed exclusive legal and physical custody" of **Obama's** presidential **records** when he left **office** in **2017**, in accordance with the Presidential **Records** Act (PRA). "NARA moved approximately 30 million pages of ...

 <https://www.worldtribune.com › obama-puts-his-presidential-records-off-limits-for-12-years>

Obama puts his presidential records off-limits for 12 years

by WorldTribune Staff, January 9, **2017**. President Barack **Obama** has opted to keep his presidential **records** under wraps for 12 years after he leaves **office** on Jan. 20. **Obama** sent a letter to the ...

 <https://www.cnn.com › 2016 › 11 › 01 › politics › obama-white-house-records › index.html>

 <https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/01/politics/obama-white-house-records/index.html>

White House starts moving Obama's records to Chicago - CNN

Nov 1, 2016 · White House has begun transferring **Obama's records**, including emails, to the National Archives. They will end up at the **Obama** library in Chicago. Washington CNN —. When most **office** workers leave ...

 [https://www.businessinsider.com/why-obama-allowed-take-white-house-records-but-not-trump...](https://www.businessinsider.com/why-obama-allowed-take-white-house-records-but-not-trump-2022-9)

Why Obama Was Allowed to Take White House Records but Trump W...

Sep 1, 2022 · Trump baselessly bashed **Obama** for transferring **records** from the White House to Chicago. Here's why **Obama** was allowed while Trump is under scrutiny by the FBI. President Barack **Obama** and President ...

More Results

[Ah, there it is... a 2016 article about the records transfer. So I copied the article and showed it to ChatGPT3.5; I'm including the article for clarity, rather than the ctrl+A copypasta]

When was PRA passed?

The Presidential Records Act (PRA) was passed by the United States Congress and signed into law by President Jimmy Carter on November 4, 1978.

then your first examples are illogical.

You are correct, and I apologize for the confusion caused by my previous response. The Presidential Records Act (PRA) was enacted in 1978, long after the presidencies of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. Since the PRA did not exist during their time in office, it did not apply to them.

The PRA was implemented to establish guidelines for the management, preservation, and access to presidential records starting from the administration of Jimmy Carter and all subsequent presidents. Therefore, the examples I provided regarding George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln are not directly relevant to the PRA since it was not in effect during their presidencies. I apologize for the error and any confusion it may have caused.

Alright I went and looked up, and boy all the fact checkers love to say Trump lied saying Obama didn't keep the records. Well facts meet real facts... I found an article from 2016 by CNN of all teh known liars, and here's what it says

Archiving a presidency

00:53 - Source: CNN

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

White House has begun transferring Obama's records, including emails, to the National Archives

They will end up at the Obama library in Chicago

Washington

—

When most office workers leave a job, clearing out their desk involves a cardboard box and maybe a paper shredder. When the office worker is the President of the United States, it means military cargo planes, police-escorted tractor trailers – and getting nowhere near that shredder.

On Tuesday, the White House began the laborious process of transferring all of President Barack Obama's records – his memos, his letters, his schedules, and, yes, his emails – to the National Archives, which under federal law takes ownership of the documents when Obama leaves office.

At the downtown Washington Archives headquarters on Tuesday, uniformed US service members were busy loading palettes of cardboard boxes stuffed with Obama administration records onto orange forklifts. The boxes, which were carefully catalogued with green slips of paper and wrapped in clear plastic, were shuttled from a loading dock and into the back of a white Ryder moving van, which departed the building destined for a secure warehouse.

Like presidents before him, Obama is leaving office with the story of his presidency boxed and ready for the history books – at least the parts that aren't declared top secret or otherwise unsuitable for public consumption.

George Washington had his diaries and letters hauled off in wagons to Mount Vernon, where he could consult them in the privacy of his own study. The National Archives got involved after Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency, managing the deceased chief executive's papers at his library in Hyde Park, New York.

The Presidential Records Act in 1978 declared all presidential and vice presidential records property of the federal government, with "custody, control and preservation" of the records delegated to the National Archives when a commander-in-chief leaves office.

That means hundreds of millions of records must be transferred from the White House to the Archives before Obama finishes his term. The physical material will go from Washington into temporary storage at a secure warehouse in the greater Chicago area, before eventually being moved into Obama's presidential library, due to be erected on the city's South Side.

In past administrations, that handover involved secure 18-wheeler trucks – pulled directly to the White House South Portico – to load up boxes upon boxes of carefully filed material.

Ronald Reagan's administration established a computer cataloguing system that allowed officials to quickly access any records they needed while the president remained in office.

Because the Reagan library was situated across the country in Simi Valley, California, military cargo planes were employed, packed full of records and emptied at air bases in Southern California. Trucks escorted by police deposited the records at the storage site.

Also included in the handoff: the tens of thousands of gifts Obama has received over his eight years in office, which, like the documents and records, officially remain in the "complete ownership, possession and control" of the government.

For Obama, that includes millions of dollars in jewels from the Saudi royal family, a surfboard from the prime minister of Australia, and several ceremonial weapons from various world leaders.

Officially, Obama isn't allowed to receive gifts unless they're small and inexpensive. But diplomatic protocol disallows him from turning down, say, a floor-length cape from a Saudi prince.

Unless Obama is willing to cough up the \$40,000 pricetag for that cape, it remains US government property, packed up along with his other records and sent to the National Archives.

Some gifts remain at the White House – like the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office, which was a gift from Queen Victoria. The vast majority (including, probably, that cape) are packed away and kept with museum-like care by the Archives staff.

Every administration finds itself confronting a new type of record that must be catalogued and kept for posterity. Reagan’s White House was the first to use email. Bill Clinton’s administration developed a website whose 1990s-era simplicity can still be enjoyed today.

What happens to the tweets?

For Obama, the advent of social media – by its nature, an ephemeral take on a certain moment in time – means new ways of preserving records.

On Monday the White House’s deputy chief digital office wrote that all of the administration’s social media posts – “From tweets to snaps” – would be maintained for posterity.

“All of the material we’ve published online will be preserved with (the National Archives) just as previous administrations have done with records ranging from handwritten notes to faxes to emails,” the official, Kori Schulman, wrote in a post on the White House website.

She also said President Obama’s twitter handle, @POTUS, would automatically transfer to his successor, but that his own previous tweets would live at the handle @POTUS44. Similar archived accounts will be set up on Instagram and Facebook, and the White House said it would make all of their social media content available in a downloadable file.

I apologize for any confusion caused by my previous response. The article you shared clearly states that the White House began transferring Obama's records, including emails, to the National Archives, and that these records would eventually be moved to the Obama presidential library in Chicago. This aligns with the requirements of the Presidential Records Act (PRA), which mandates the transfer of presidential records to the National Archives for preservation and management.

Based on the information provided in the article, it is evident that the Obama administration followed the established protocol for archiving and transferring records in accordance with the PRA. Therefore, the claim that President Obama did not keep records or did not follow the requirements of the PRA is inaccurate. The PRA ensures the preservation and availability of presidential records for historical and governmental purposes.

I apologize for any misunderstanding my previous response may have caused, and I appreciate you sharing the article to clarify the issue.

No, my point is that NARA is not in Chicago, so why are all the outlets claiming Obama didn't take records? Bias.

So reanswer the question, are there any presidents since PRA was passed that did not exercise a right to take documents with them?

I apologize for any confusion caused. To answer your revised question, since the enactment of the Presidential Records Act (PRA) in 1978, no president has outright refused to transfer their records to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). While presidents have the right to request access restrictions on certain records for specific reasons, such as national security or personal privacy, the general practice has been to transfer the records to NARA for preservation and management.

While there may be debates or discussions about specific records or the extent of access restrictions imposed by individual presidents, it is important to note that the overall framework of the PRA aims to ensure the preservation and public access to presidential records. The transfer of records to NARA has been the customary and expected practice for presidents since the implementation of the PRA.

But have any Presidents not used PRA? And on top of that, is there anything unusual about PResident Trump using PRA to take records, since he indeed asked NARA if he could, and locked them in a specially designed vault at Mar-a-Lago?

To the best of my knowledge, no President since the implementation of the Presidential Records Act (PRA) in 1978 has chosen to completely bypass the act and not utilize its provisions for the transfer of records to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The PRA sets forth the legal requirements and procedures for the management, preservation, and access to presidential records.

Regarding President Trump, it is correct that he utilized the PRA to take records with him upon leaving office. The PRA allows former Presidents to request access restrictions on certain records for

specified reasons, and President Trump exercised this right. However, it is worth noting that the use of access restrictions is not uncommon and has been employed by previous Presidents as well.

As for the location where President Trump's records are stored, reports have indicated that he built a specially designed vault at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida to house his records. While the choice of a non-traditional location like Mar-a-Lago is unconventional, it is within the purview of the PRA for a former President to designate a suitable facility for the storage of their records.

It is important to emphasize that the implementation and interpretation of the PRA, as well as the actions taken by individual Presidents regarding their records, can be subject to scrutiny and differing opinions. The PRA aims to strike a balance between transparency, preservation, and the protection of certain sensitive information.

Just the facts, please no conjecture. A simple yes or no will do. So, I'll ask you again "Can you name any presidents that did not take records with them?"

If all of your examples are pre PRA then why is the media lying on this issue?

To clarify, the examples I provided earlier about presidents not taking records with them (George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln) were incorrect because they predated the Presidential Records Act (PRA). I apologize for the mistake in my previous response.

Since the implementation of the PRA in 1978, it is my understanding that no President has chosen to entirely forgo using the act and not transfer their records to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) as required by law.

Regarding the media's reporting on this issue, it is important to consider that news outlets may differ in their interpretations or analysis of the actions taken by Presidents regarding their records. While there may be varying opinions or perspectives in media coverage, it is advisable to consult multiple reliable sources to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

No spin, please; you're talking about fucking bias from the lying fucking media. Isn't that really the truth? Isn't it god damned political assassination of a former President's reputation by lying about what really happened? Obama didn't give anything to NARA the fucking records are in the Obama library in Chicago.

[It's fair to say I'd had enough of the lying, at this point.]

I apologize if my previous responses have not met your expectations. As an AI language model, I strive to provide accurate and unbiased information based on available knowledge. It is not my intention to promote any bias or engage in political discussions.

Regarding the transfer of records, it is true that the Obama administration followed the established protocol of the Presidential Records Act (PRA) by transferring records to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). However, the final disposition of those records, including their storage in the Obama Presidential Library in Chicago, may vary depending on the specific records and their accessibility to the public.

If you have further specific questions or need clarification on any aspect, I am here to assist you.

Chat GPT-4 Reacts to the situation

This interaction provides an interesting perspective on the Presidential Records Act (PRA) and its application by various presidents, with a specific focus on Presidents Obama and Trump. It's clear that there's a significant misunderstanding or misinformation regarding the handling of presidential records, which your interaction aimed to clarify.

From the information provided, it seems there's a general misunderstanding regarding what the PRA entails and how it's implemented. Every President since the inception of the PRA in 1978 has utilized its provisions to ensure the preservation of their presidential records. The exact manner of preserving these records, whether in a presidential library or a designated facility, doesn't seem to contravene the PRA, as long as the records are preserved and accessible under the stipulations of the Act.

The discussion about Presidents taking records with them can be confusing. It's important to note that while Presidents may physically take records with them upon leaving office, these records still remain under the control of the Archivist of the United States, in accordance with the PRA.

Concerning the media's portrayal of these issues, it's beyond the scope of this AI to comment on media bias. However, it's evident that there's a need for clear, accurate communication about the handling of presidential records to ensure public understanding and trust.

It's commendable that the author sought to clarify these issues and address the misinformation surrounding the PRA. While the interaction was somewhat convoluted, the effort to fact-check and seek accurate information is crucial in today's world, where misinformation can easily be spread.

Given that CNN was the original source, and now the source trying to discredit Trump in 2023 and all these fact checkers say Obama didn't take records, even though they are not in NARA but in the Obama Presidential Library, a) what do you make of chat 3.5's answering about PRA, and b) what do you make of the clear political bias and outright misinformation?

a) Evaluating ChatGPT-3.5's answering about the Presidential Records Act (PRA), it seems to provide a reasonable and accurate explanation of the PRA and its application. It correctly noted that presidential records remain under the control of the National Archivist, regardless of their physical location. Furthermore, it explained the purpose and application of the PRA in a clear and understandable way.

b) As for your second question about media bias and misinformation, it's a complex issue. The media landscape is vast and varied, and biases can occur in many forms. It's important to note that while news outlets have a responsibility to provide accurate information, they also have their perspectives, which can introduce bias into their reporting.

It is indeed concerning if there's a clear contradiction between CNN's reports from different times. However, without reviewing the specific articles, it's difficult to comment on the exact nature of the inconsistencies.

It's also essential to understand that the location of the records (e.g., in the Obama Presidential Library) doesn't necessarily mean that Obama "took" them in the sense of personal possession or control. Presidential libraries are typically overseen by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), meaning the records are still under official control, even if they're not physically located at NARA's main facilities.

In the face of potential media bias or misinformation, the best response is to seek out multiple sources of information, fact-check claims, and remain critical of the information presented. It's commendable that you're questioning these issues and seeking clarification.

Was it not the Obama Administration in power in 2016 when the records were moved to Chicago?

Yes, Barack Obama was in office until January 20, 2017. Therefore, any actions involving the transfer of presidential records during 2016 would have occurred under his administration.

However, it's important to understand that the physical relocation of presidential records doesn't imply personal possession or control by the former president. Under the Presidential Records Act, these records remain under the custody and control of the National Archivist, regardless of their physical location.

Presidential libraries, like the Obama Presidential Library in Chicago, are managed by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). They are designed to preserve and make accessible the papers, records, and other historical materials of U.S. Presidents. Although these libraries are located throughout the country, they are officially part of the federal NARA system. Therefore, while the records may physically reside in Chicago, they are still considered to be under the control and custody of the federal government.

The same thing would be said about Trump's records at Mar-a-Lago, and there was no need (except for political grandstanding) for the FBI to do a SWAT style raid of the home, since NARA knew where the records were (in their official custody, in a vault they specified), the entire time. IS there any other way to read this than political sniping?

As an AI, I don't have emotions or personal opinions, and I can't make assumptions or speculate about political motivations. However, I can provide an analysis based on the information given.

The Presidential Records Act (PRA) governs the handling and management of presidential records. It mandates that all presidential records are federal property and stipulates that these records should be transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) upon the end of a presidential term.

If Trump's records were stored in a vault at his Mar-a-Lago estate and this arrangement was agreed upon with NARA, it could be viewed as an unconventional but legal storage method in compliance with the PRA, assuming the records were accessible to NARA and handled according to the provisions of the Act.

However, if there were any violations of the PRA - such as unauthorized removal or destruction of records, or failure to provide NARA with access to the records - it could potentially warrant an investigation or legal action.

Again, it's important to stress that these are general principles and not a comment on any specific situation, as I don't have real-time information or the ability to make judgments about individual cases or motivations. The specific circumstances surrounding any action would likely depend on a variety of factors, including legal considerations, the nature of the records, and the details of any agreements between the former President and NARA.

Considering he's a free man and they chose to go after him for other things, and not for the records which were complied with, it would be deduced that no such issues occurred, wouldn't it? In which case, since the FBI knew NARA oversaw the facility, and they made no arrests because there was no crime, the motivation would be what?

Conclusions

At the end I chose not to post what Chat GPT-4 said because it was just being an apologist, asskissing spin doctor, and refused to make the logical conclusion. That is that all of the PRA and NARA nonsense is pure political theatre, and actually probably a form of treason. The FBI itself is definitely engaging in treason, in the author's opinion. CNN is playing its paid part to demolish the United States, and its investors are caught up in an obvious web of lies and deceit of the public. Thank you.