

**Society of American Archivists
Council Conference Call
October 6, 2017
1:00 – 2:00 pm EST**

**SAA Statement on Government Transparency
(Prepared by the SAA Executive Committee)**

BACKGROUND

As the Committee on Public Policy works on revising SAA’s Public Policy Agenda for consideration by the Council in November 2017, we see a need to bring forward at this time a simple statement on the value and importance of transparency in government – a concept that is embedded throughout the text of the Agenda but is not stated explicitly. We propose the following.

**SAA Statement on the Value and Importance of Transparency in Government
October 2017**

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) promotes the protection and accessibility of records found in governments, organizations, and archives repositories. Because records ensure the protection of individuals’ rights, the accountability of governments and organizations, and the accessibility of historical information, equal and equitable public access to government information is a cornerstone of our democracy.

SAA firmly believes that the critical nature of information in a democracy places the burden to prove the need for confidentiality, or the legitimacy of excluding information from the public domain, on those asserting such claims. Therefore, SAA strongly opposes any effort by presidential administrations to deny U.S. citizens access to government information found in archives and records.

SAA will continue to work with individuals, groups, and allied organizations to monitor the impact of the current Administration’s recent decisions affecting access to the public record—including most recently questions of secrecy in a proposed border security bill, access to Mar-A-Lago visitor logs, and a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gag order on employees speaking with the press, among others—and to ensure that our voices are heard on these issues.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do Council members see value in having such a statement “on the books”?
- Is this the appropriate statement at this time?