



CITY OF SEATTLE

February 16, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: City of Seattle Request for Biden/Harris Administration to stop the sale of the National Archives facility located in Seattle, WA consistent with recent federal injunction

Dear President Biden,

On behalf of the City of Seattle, we request your Administration intervene immediately to halt the harmful process currently underway to close and sell the National Archives and Records Administration facility in Seattle, WA. The sale would relocate millions of historical documents and artifacts thousands of miles away; thus, leaving City of Seattle communities unable to access important documents and the truth of their history. This deprives the Northwestern area of the United States of any national archives facility—a move that severely hampers regional research by students, the news media, authors, attorneys, historians, genealogists and Tribal governments, those who rely on them most. The City of Seattle implores that you revisit this federal process and engage in meaningful consultation with local stakeholders and Tribal Nations to keep Pacific Northwest history in the Pacific Northwest.

The General Services Administration (GSA), the National Archives and Records Administration Office (NARA), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Public Building Reform Board (PBRB) have all rushed this flawed process to move the sale of the building located at 6125 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA. These facts are detailed in the pending federal lawsuit recently filed against these agencies captioned *State of Washington v. Russell Vought et al.*, No. 2:21-cv-00002-JCC (W.D. Wash.). This harmful decision was made without public meetings and without soliciting comments from stakeholders of the four impacted Pacific Northwest states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. On January 15, 2020 NARA informed the Washington State Archive (WSA) after a decision was already made by the PBRB. On February 16, 2021, Judge Coughenour for the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington entered a preliminary injunction against the agencies, blocking the contemplated sale. It is critical that your Administration revisit this decision and engage in appropriate public input process, including government-to-government consultation with Tribes. A great opportunity is present here to cite your [January 26, 2021 memorandum](#) to strengthen Tribal consultation by facilitating tribal access to their own archival history. In addition, by considering what other properties in Seattle might be able to host these priceless records, your administration can signal its commitment to improving federal-local relations in the Pacific Northwest, which suffered under your predecessor. You have begun your presidency with a strong commitment to intergovernmental cooperation and this case provides a tangible moment to put that commitment to action.



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The National Archives is a vital resource to countless stakeholders throughout the Pacific Northwest. Its records hold our history and are invaluable for the academics, students, and private citizens who work to keep the past alive. As just one vivid example, its records document the federal government's internment of our Japanese American community's ancestors during the Second World War. It also holds records crucial to many seeking to enforce their legal rights. These include tribal nations who depend upon the National Archives for the minutes of treaty negotiations, tribal citizens seeking to document their membership through tribal rolls, and even Seattle property owners who consult the National Archives to understand their chains of title. Our City government services, particularly the Seattle Public Library and Seattle Public Schools, depend upon the National Archives for these purposes and more.

PBRB and OMB forced through a decision to sell the facility *and* move the impacted records thousands of miles away with little to no public input or the sort of meaningful government-to-government consultation your Administration has already championed in its first weeks. The City of Seattle thus implores you to reconsider the decision currently underway, and instead find a cooperative approach to preserve this resource where it belongs. We respectfully ask that you reject the PBRB's recommendations and work with Members of Congress to re-authorize the PBRB with clearer requirements to identify the properties that would benefit from expedited sale and redevelopment without such detrimental community impacts, increase transparency of the process for stakeholders, and engage in meaningful tribal consultation consistent with your January 26, 2021 executive memorandum. If the sale moves forward, we ask that you direct the PBRB to identify local properties able to continue hosting the National Archives within the state of Washington, so that our communities can retain access to the records of their history. Our City stands ready and willing to assist your administration in this effort.

Thank you,

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

Council President M. Lorena González

Councilmember Lisa Herbold

Councilmember Debora Juarez

Councilmember Andrew J. Lewis

Councilmember Tammy J. Morales



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Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda

Councilmember Alex Pedersen

Councilmember Kshama Sawant

Councilmember Dan Strauss