

### III. ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the committee's 1991 report, there has been a trend toward increasing public access to formerly restricted records. For example, the clerk of the House has streamlined access procedures for records older than thirty years. There has been an increase in legislatively mandated access to classified records such as the records of the House Select Committee on Assassinations. And, some committees, such as the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, have requested that their records be made available earlier than the standard twenty years.

This enhanced access to legislative records has been mirrored in the executive branch, as evidenced by Executive Order 12958 regarding the release of classified records that are over twenty-five years old in the year 2000. This initiative has, in turn, increased researcher interest in classified congressional records. The number of requests that the Center receives for such material has increased markedly.

Within the next five years efforts should be made to expedite the declassification of executive branch classified information that is included in committee records. Although EO 12958 does not apply to the legislative branch, both branches should apply the spirit of the Executive Order to facilitate appropriate release of such information. By taking advantage of the presence of agency declassification teams that are already reviewing other records at NARA, Congress could bring its classified holdings in line with the same information that exists in executive branch records. Each body should also look for opportunities to expedite access to records that have significant research potential, such as the records of the House Un-American Activities Committee.