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The Washington Post

Obama orders creation of declassification center

By Michael D. Shear

President Obama created by executive order Tuesday a National Declassification Center to oversee efforts to make once-secret government documents public.

The order comes as part of Obama's promise to push government to err on the side of disclosure as it tackles the need to keep certain information from the public.

In a [post on the White House blog](#), William H. Leary, the senior director of records and access management at the National Security Council, writes that the effort is aimed at shifting the burden of defending secrecy to the government.

"While the Government must be able to prevent the public disclosure of information that would compromise the national security, a democratic government accountable to the people must be as transparent as possible and must not withhold information for self-serving reasons or simply to avoid embarrassment," Leary wrote.

As a candidate, Obama promised to run the most open and transparent administration ever. He has released White House visitor log data for the first time, though only months after the visits. But his decision not to release some information about detainee torture and his acceptance of closed-door negotiations on the health care bill in Congress have brought criticism from good-government groups.

In the executive order, Obama instructs the government not to keep secrets forever, eliminates the ability of intelligence officials to veto declassification decisions, and requires agencies to conduct reviews of their classification procedures.

Source: <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/12/obama-orders-creation-of-decla.html>