

Rep Cynthia McKinney's Tupac Shakur Legislative Primer

Written by Robert ID2214

Sunday, 18 December 2005 22:39 -

Georgia State Representative Cynthia McKinney has introduced a bill before the United States Congress that would require the National Archives to establish a "Tupac Amaru Shakur Records Collection."

Modeled after the famed "John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act," McKinney's newly-introduced bill would allow public access to privileged details of hip-hop cultures late rap icon's life and death.

Congresswoman McKinney, the Democratic representative of the 4th District of DeKalb County, Georgia, based her "Tupac Shakur Records Collection Act" on the premise that "all government records related to the life and death of Tupac Amaru Shakur should be preserved for historical and governmental purposes."

This bill has got much attention among, not just among those in the hip-hop culture and among the fans of the late rap icon Tupac Shakur but also among a lot of the nation.

Since Congresswoman McKinney is one of the most accessible government officials I have ever had the pleasure to communicate with, we wanted to ask her the questions that many were emailing us regarding this bill and to find out more on how the process works. With all her other duties we thank her for her time and very much appreciate her insight.

Congresswoman McKinney's Tupac Shakur Legislative Primer.

ThugLifeArmy.com - Can you tell us how that bill was worded and how does the process proceed from here?

Rep. Cynthia McKinney - Go on the web to <http://thomas.loc.gov> and search H.R. 4210. the Tupac Amaru Shakur Records Collection Act. From here we need to get co-sponsors and public pressure to have hearings and move the legislation. Every Member of Congress should be called and emailed to push for sponsorship and passage, and if the Member is on the House

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Government Reform Committee, they should push for hearings. For a summary of the bill, contact the DC office. There is a similar bill already introduced, H.R. 2554, the Rev. Martin Luther King Records Act of 2005 to release all the files on the life and death of Dr. King which is gathering co-sponsors now.

ThugLifeArmy.com - Where there be meetings on this or just a few people saying yes we should or no we shouldn't?

Rep. Cynthia McKinney - Anyone who supports the bill can call or hold local meetings to promote call-in or write-in campaigns, websites could be set up to push the bill, existing hip-hop sites could create links for information or automatic letters to representatives based on zip codes, and delegations could visit Congress members in home offices or on the Hill in DC to lobby for the bill. Articles and letters about the bill in hip hop or local magazines and newspapers could help get it passed. The JFK Records Act passed because of a groundswell of people who saw the movie JFK and saw that the records were still locked up, so they wrote and called to free the files.

ThugLifeArmy.com - Can people request that this is done by getting at their congress representative or is it really out of the hands of those outside of government?

Rep. Cynthia McKinney - It is completely at the hands of the people outside the government, since Congress is unlikely to move on the bill without public pressure.

Members of Congress can be lobbied to support the bill, sponsor the bill, push for hearings and speak out for passage to their constituents. If they know young people won't vote for them unless they act on the Tupac or Dr. King Records Acts they will be inspired to move on it.

ThugLifeArmy.com - How would people get involved and request and show backing for this bill?

Rep. Cynthia McKinney - People can speak out about it, hold hip hop events to support it with printed literature or postcards already written and addressed to local Congress members, raise it

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at public meetings with the Congress member or any other meeting, pass petitions in support of the bill and send in the collected names to the Congressional offices, get organizations to support the bill and let their members know to lobby for it. Have materials about the bill available at all youth events. Write a song about the life and death of Tupac Shakur and why we need the files opened. Hold a creative arts contest (paintings, songs, etc.) on Tupac's life and death for young people to take part in and send the winning art/music to the Congress member and get the press involved. Create a hip hop music CD to be played at local radio stations that reach youth telling them to push for the bill.

ThugLifeArmy.com - How long does a bill like this take to get approval?

Rep. Cynthia McKinney - If Congress wants to move on a bill it can happen right away. Committees can stop bills by never holding hearings on them or letting them out of Rules Committee where the bill is already. House Government Reform Committee needs to be pushed by its members to hold hearings and then vote in favor of the bill to move it to a full floor vote. Here are the members of that Committee, see if your representative is on it -

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 Rayburn House Office Building

(202) 225-5074

(202) 225-3974 FAX

Chairman Tom Davis (VA)

Republicans

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Christopher Shays (CT), Vice-Chair

Dan Burton (IN)

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL)

John M. McHugh (NY)

John L. Mica (FL)

Gil Gutknecht (MN)

Mark E. Souder (IN)

Steven C. LaTourette (OH)

Todd Russell Platts (PA)

Chris Cannon (UT)

John J. Duncan, Jr. (TN)

Candice S. Miller (MI)

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Michael R. Turner (OH)

Darrell E. Issa (CA)

Ginny Brown-Waite (FL)

Jon C. Porter (NV)

Kenny Marchant (TX)

Lynn A. Westmoreland (GA)

Patrick T. McHenry (NC)

Charles W. Dent (PA)

Virginia Foxx (NC)

Vacancy

Democrats

Henry A. Waxman (CA)

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Tom Lantos (CA)

Major R. Owens (NY)

Edolphus Towns (NY)

Paul E. Kanjorski (PA)

Carolyn B. Maloney (NY)

Elijah E. Cummings (MD)

Dennis J. Kucinich (OH)

Danny K. Davis (IL)

Wm. Lacy Clay (MO)

Diane E. Watson (CA)

Stephen F. Lynch (MA)

Chris Van Hollen (MD)

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Linda T. Sanchez (CA)

C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger (MD)

Brian Higgins (NY)

Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC)

Independent

Bernard Sanders (VT)

ThugLifeArmy.com - Do you see it being approved?

Rep. Cynthia McKinney - It has gotten a lot of attention in Roll Call, a Congressional publication already, and several Congressional offices have asked about it. There is no way to know if it will be passed without knowing if there will be an organized public pressure in favor of it. It should not be a controversial bill since most of the records are from the past and the cost of releasing them to the Archives will be low.

ThugLifeArmy.com - After the records are released then what would be the next course of action by you and others?

Rep. Cynthia McKinney - Some records are already released that throw doubt on the officially unsolved murder of Tupac and the police version of the death. It seems clear that Tupac, who came from a family of very militant Black Panther activists, would himself have been followed and surveilled if not attacked by the FBI and their counter-gang programs. In the past this sort of surveillance was called COINTELPRO or Counter-Intelligence Program and aimed at peace,

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civil rights and militant activists who were working for social change. It not only surveilled people but it infiltrated groups with informants and provocateurs, created fights within groups, spread rumors about leaders, and created the conditions that led to political assassination, framing and imprisonment or destruction of progressive organizations. Senator Frank Church and others held hearings in the 1970s that exposed and made illegal some of the excesses of the FBI, CIA and military intelligence agencies. Soon Church and others on his committee were voted out of office with the help of intelligence agency support for other candidates. Even before 9/11 ongoing programs against Central America activists and youth culture musicians and leaders that looked exactly like COINTELPRO were exposed. After 9/11 Atty General Ashcroft and others called to renew the powers of COINTELPRO and even tried to pretend 9/11 happened because the CIA, FBI and DIA had their hands tied behind their backs the the Church committee rules. If the released records reveal that federal, state and local government agencies and police were violating Tupac's rights or setting the stage for his murder, there should be an outcry for a full investigation, criminal charges, demotions or firings of intelligence agents involved, and a change in the power of intelligence agencies to continue these practices.

ThugLifeArmy.com - Would they be released like the previously released FBI files where a lot of the text is blacked out so it is released but really you can not read anything into it?

(
http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/shakur_t.htm
)

Rep. Cynthia McKinney - The fact that FBI files exist on Tupac tells us something already. Files with sections marked out are called "redacted", others are withheld in full. However, even portions of files tell us things when we know how to read them fully. The Records Act takes the decision of what files to hold back or redact away from the agencies that created them. They must send all records to the Archivist first and then request a review if they want anything postponed or redacted instead of released. Also the Act changes the grounds on which they can claim a right to redact or postpone a document, limiting it to information that would expose a current informant, agent, covert operation, or damage existing national security matters. Not many files meet that criteria, and if the Archivist overrides them they have 30 days to appeal to the President.

Three years after passage of the Act any remaining postponed or redacted records must be released in full. There is a presumption of release in the language of the bill, and public interest should outweigh any but the strongest arguments for continued secrecy of federal files. For an example, the Freedom of Information Act requests from 1964-1994 released about 2,000 pages on the JFK assassination by the agencies. The independent Review Board under the JFK Act released 6.5 million pages since 1994, with more coming out and all released in 2017.

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For more information, contact John Judge in Congresswoman McKinney's office at 202-225-1605.

The "Tupac Shakur Records Collection Act" can be viewed in its entirety at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/congress/2005/hr4210.html>