



## **RESOLUTION REGARDING THE CLASSIFICATION OF U.S. GOVERNMENT INFORMATION**

**WHEREAS,** The end of the Cold War offers an appropriate opportunity to revise the criteria for national security classification and declassification, and to address the mountain of older, but still classified, documents, some dating back to World War I; and

**WHEREAS,** Numerous federal reports released in the last decade have documented problems of overclassification resulting in an expensive and burdensome system; and

**WHEREAS,** The nation needs a sound classification policy that balances protection of sensitive information with a commitment to greater openness and accountability in government; and

**WHEREAS,** President Clinton has stated, "It is time to reevaluate the onerous and costly system of security which has led to the overclassification of documents," and has issued the Presidential Review Directive on National Security Information on April 26, which calls for the development of a new executive order to eliminate excessive classification and to create a new system that can declassify information as quickly as possible; and

**WHEREAS,** President Clinton has established a task force for this much-needed and long-overdue review which is composed primarily of officials who built the current classification system; and

**WHEREAS,** A major revision of the federal security classification system is in the public interest and is essential to a full public understanding of America's public policy and recent history; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED,** That the American Library Association urge President Clinton to:

- reduce drastically the scope of secrecy within the federal government,
- review all forms of security classification in the agencies of the government,
- institute a systematic declassification system to ensure future public access, and
- prohibit restrictions on public use of government information solely on the basis that it is sensitive but unclassified;

and, be it further

**RESOLVED,** That ALA urge the President to change the composition of the task force responsible for the revision of the security classification system to include not only the perspective of agency staff but also independent professionals well acquainted with the security system, and to include formal public input at all stages of this review process, and to provide drafts of the new executive order to the public for comment well in advance of the task force's November 30 deadline; and, be it further

**RESOLVED,** That ALA urge the President to issue a new executive order that will:

- establish guidelines for future classification of material that limit the creation of new secrets and provide for maximum public release of policy-related information,
- re-establish a balancing test that takes into account the public interest in release of the information,
- classify information only if there is identifiable harm from its release,
- ensure that records are automatically declassified after the set time period expires,
- establish bulk declassification procedures for older documents to hasten their release at minimal cost,
- prohibit the reclassification of government information already in the public domain, and
- establish mechanisms to ensure outside independent review of agency classification decisions;

and, be it further

**RESOLVED,** That the American Library Association send copies of this resolution to President William Jefferson Clinton and appropriate Congressional committees and federal officials.

Adopted by the Council of the  
American Library Association  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
June 30, 1993  
(Council Document 27.8)