



Thomas, W. Dennis: Files, 1985-1987

Finding Aid Type

White House Staff and Office File Collections

Subtitle/Office

Office of the Chief of Staff

Specialization Heading

Assistant to the President

Disclaimer

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Record Type

Textual

Biography

Biography

W. Dennis Thomas was a federal employee and appointee in the Congress, the Department of the Treasury and the White House. He had a long second career as a corporate executive with the International Paper Company.

William Dennis Thomas, August 12, 1943-September 23, 2014, was born in Baltimore, Maryland. He grew up in central Maryland, earning a B.S. degree from Frostburg State College in 1965, and a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Maryland in 1967. After graduate school he served for about a year as Administrative Assistant to the Board of Education of Carroll County, northwest of Baltimore. From 1969 to 1976 he was Administrative Assistant for Glenn Beall Jr., a Republican Congressman and Senator from Maryland. After Beall was defeated for reelection in 1976, Thomas became Administrative Assistant to Senator William Roth (R-Delaware).

When Ronald Reagan became President in 1981, he appointed Mr. Thomas Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs in the Department of the Treasury. In this position Thomas worked with Congress, and Treasury Secretary Donald Regan, as the Administration tried to enact its economic agenda into law. Thomas moved to the White House staff in December 1983, as the Deputy Assistant for Legislative Affairs in charge of relations with the House of Representatives. He left in April 1985 for a position with the professional service organization Touche Ross, but returned to the White House as Regan's assistant.

Appointed in July 1985, Thomas served as a *de facto* deputy chief of staff, though this title was never assigned to him. Thomas advised and assisted newly appointed Chief of Staff Regan on the full range of policy and administrative matters, with a concentration on economic policy.

Thomas left the White House staff for the second time in May 1987, about three months after Regan's departure. He joined the International Paper Company, rising to the position of Senior Vice President of Public Affairs and Communications. He served on the Boards of Directors for various corporations and non-profits. He was a member of the Council on American Politics for the George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management.

After his retirement in 2005, Thomas promoted and supported his alma mater, Frostburg State College in founding the Sloop Institute for Excellence in Leadership, the J. Glenn Beall, Jr. Public Affairs Institute, and the Dennis and Dawn Thomas

Presidential Leadership Scholarship. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Frostburg in May 2014.

Thomas was married to his wife Dawn for 49 years. He had one son and several grandchildren and was happily retired in central Maryland. He died of cancer after a three-year battle on September 23, 2014.

Scope and Content Note

After leaving the White House for a short time in early 1985, W, Dennis Thomas returned in July 1985 to begin work as the chief assistant to Donald Regan, the White House Chief of Staff. He served as a *de facto* deputy chief of staff, though this title was never assigned to him. Thomas advised and assisted Regan on the full range of policy and administrative matters, with a concentration on economic policy. Thomas also oversaw White House staff involvement in President Reagan's overseas trips and coordinated the drafting of Reagan's State of the Union messages. He attended many Administration meetings with Mr. Regan, accompanied Regan on some of President Reagan's travels, screened appointment requests and telephone calls for Regan, and occasionally substituted for Regan at meetings and events.

The files contain many handwritten draft memos, draft speeches, notes, and marginalia from Thomas, Regan, and others in the White House Office. Copies of the same documents are often filed in more than one series.

This collection consists of six series: SERIES I: Chronological File, 1985-1987; SERIES II: General File, 1985-1987; SERIES III: Meeting File, 1985-1987; SERIES IV: Issues File, 1985-1987; SERIES V: Regan Memorandum File, 1985-1987; and SERIES VI: Diskette File, 1985-1987.

Series List

SERIES I: Chronological File, 1985-1987

This series contains: copies of memos and notes exchanged between Dennis Thomas, Donald Regan, and others on the White House staff; unsolicited personnel

recommendations, scheduling proposals, and event invitations; published articles and reports sent to Thomas; draft and final versions of presidential speeches, Administration statements, and White House press guidance; requests for birthday and anniversary greetings; handwritten and typed thank-you notes; and notes on telephone calls made to Thomas or Regan. Topics include the proposing and scheduling of Presidential trips and events, tax and budget policy (including the Tax Reform Act of 1986 and the Gramm-Rudman Act), the federal deficit, planning and public relations work for summit meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev, the White House's public response to the Iran-Contra affair, and antidrug policy. The material is arranged chronologically by month.

SERIES II: General File, 1985-1987

This alphabetically arranged series contains material pertaining to Thomas' and Regan's correspondence with units within the White House Office, on topics such as the drafting of Presidential speeches, long-range policy planning, unsolicited personnel recommendations and requests for Presidential events, the selecting of a new Secretary of Health and Human Services, and White House staff personnel. The series also has material pertaining to White House administrative matters such as staff travel and gift handling, and correspondence with friends and acquaintances of Mr. Thomas.

SERIES III: MEETING FILE, 1985-1987

This series contains material pertaining to the planning and execution of various meetings and trips. Much of the material pertains to President Reagan's foreign trips, including the summit meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva (1985) and Reykjavik (1986), the trips to the annual G7 meetings in Tokyo (1986) and Venice (1987), and the 1987 visit to Ottawa, Canada. Records pertaining to these travels may include Advance Office site reports and trip books, draft and final schedules, draft and final versions of Presidential speeches and statements, reports and published articles on the issues and foreign leaders involved, and schedules for post-meeting public events. Other material in this series consists of agendas, notes, press guidance, and other records pertaining to meetings that included senior White House staff (particularly the Senior Staff Planning Group), members of Congress, and the public. Such meetings involved several issues of the day, including antidrug efforts, tax and budget issues, the State of the Union Address, White House public

relations (including reaction to Iran-Contra), the proposed new Air Force One aircraft, and the allocation of White House office space. The material is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

SERIES IV: Issues File, 1985-1987

This series contains folders pertaining to specific issues, including: the federal budget (including proposed budgets and spending, the national debt, and the Gramm-Rudman Act); federal antidrug policy; tax policy, including the Tax Reform Act of 1986; Central America policy; reaction to the Iran-Contra affair by the Administration, Congress, and the media; the drafting of the 1986 and 1987 State of the Union Addresses, and public reaction to the Addresses; US trade policy, including trade sanctions against South Africa; the space shuttle *Challenger* explosion; the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident; and the assigning of offices within the White House. The material is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

SERIES V: REGAN MEMORANDUM FILE, Dec. 1985 - Feb. 1987

This series contains memos from Donald Regan to Dennis Thomas. Many of the memos have attachments, which usually consist of memos and related documents involving other White House staff or OMB personnel. Topics include long-range scheduling and policy planning, Presidential scheduling for the Geneva and Reykjavik summits, the federal budget, the State of the Union Address, strategy for public handling of Iran-Contra, the 1986 US attack on Libya, South Africa policy, antidrug policy, relations with Congress, trade policy, and the division of responsibilities among White House staff. The material is arranged chronologically by month.

SERIES VI: DISKETTE FILE

This series contains material printed from 8-inch IBM Displaywriter diskettes, the word processing system used widely by the Reagan White House. The material includes meeting agendas, responses to unsolicited personnel recommendations, general planning material for the 1986 Reykjavik summit, working papers and talking points regarding Iran-Contra, address and telephone lists, and documents apparently created by Thomas' secretary for use in her course work. The series also includes lists of document file names, instructions for printing the diskettes, and general formats for schedules and other documents. Arranged alphabetically, mostly

by diskette name.

The Reagan Library staff was able to print out only some of the material from the diskettes. The staff has transferred the diskettes to preservation storage. The Library currently does not have the ability to print any material from the IBM Displaywriter diskettes.

Last Modified Date

2024-06-25

SERIES I: Chronological File, 1985-1987

This series contains: copies of memos and notes exchanged between Dennis Thomas, Donald Regan, and others on the White House staff; unsolicited personnel recommendations, scheduling proposals, and event invitations; published articles and reports sent to Thomas; draft and final versions of presidential speeches, Administration statements, and White House press guidance; requests for birthday and anniversary greetings; handwritten and typed thank-you notes; and notes on telephone calls made to Thomas or Regan. Topics include the proposing and scheduling of Presidential trips and events, tax and budget policy (including the Tax Reform Act of 1986 and the Gramm-Rudman Act), the federal deficit, planning and public relations work for summit meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev, the White House's public response to the Iran-Contra affair, and antidrug policy. The material is arranged chronologically by month.

Box 1

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | Chron October [July] 1985-May 1986 (1)-(7) |
| OPEN | Chron June 1986-July 1986 (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Chron August 1986 (1)-(4) |
| OPEN | Chron September 1986 (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Chron October 1986 (1)-(3) |

Box 2

| Status | Title |
|---------------|---|
| OPEN | Chron October 1986 (4) |
| OPEN | Chron November 1986-December 1986 (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Chron January 1987 (1)-(5) |

| Status | Title |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| OPEN | Chron February 1987 (1)-(3) |

SERIES II: General File, 1985-1987

This alphabetically arranged series contains material pertaining to Thomas' and Regan's correspondence with units within the White House Office, on topics such as the drafting of Presidential speeches, long-range policy planning, unsolicited personnel recommendations and requests for Presidential events, the selecting of a new Secretary of Health and Human Services, and White House staff personnel. The series also has material pertaining to White House administrative matters such as staff travel and gift handling, and correspondence with friends and acquaintances of Mr. Thomas.

Box 2, cont.

| Status | Title |
|---------------|---|
| OPEN | Administration (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | [Administrative:] Emergency Notification Procedures |
| OPEN | [Administrative:] Gifts (1)-(4) |

Box 3

| Status | Title |
|---------------|---|
| OPEN | [Administrative:] Scheduling (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | [Administrative:] Special Messages (1)(2) |
| OPEN | [Administrative:] Travel (1)-(6) |
| OPEN | Advance (Henkel) (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Cabinet Affairs (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Communications (Buchanan) (1)-(3) |

Box 4

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| OPEN | [Correspondence, General A-C] |
| OPEN | [Correspondence, General D] |
| OPEN | [Correspondence, General E-F] (1)(2) |
| OPEN | [Correspondence, General G-H] |
| OPEN | [Correspondence, General I-K] |
| OPEN | [Correspondence, General L-M] |

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | [Correspondence, General N-R] |
| OPEN | [Correspondence, General S-V] |
| OPEN | [Correspondence, General W-Z] |
| OPEN | Counsel |
| OPEN | First Lady |
| OPEN | Legislative Affairs |
| OPEN | Memorandum - Miscellaneous |
| OPEN | [Military Office] |
| OPEN | NSC Personnel - General Correspondence |
| OPEN | Personnel - HHS Secretary (1)(2) |

Box 5

| Status | Title |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| OPEN | Personnel - HHS Secretary (3) |
| OPEN | Personnel - Individual Cases |
| OPEN | Personnel (White House Staff) (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Policy Development (Svahn) |
| OPEN | Political Affairs (1)-(4) |
| OPEN | Press (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Public Affairs (Maseng) |
| OPEN | White House Staff Information |
| OPEN | Wirthlin (1)(2) |

SERIES III: MEETING FILE, 1985-1987

This series contains material pertaining to the planning and execution of various meetings and trips. Much of the material pertains to President Reagan's foreign trips, including the summit meetings with Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva (1985) and Reykjavik (1986), the trips to the annual G7 meetings in Tokyo (1986) and Venice (1987), and the 1987 visit to Ottawa, Canada. Records pertaining to these travels may include Advance Office site reports and trip books, draft and final schedules, draft and final versions of Presidential speeches and statements, reports and published articles on the issues and foreign leaders involved, and schedules for post-meeting public events. Other material in this series consists of agendas, notes, press

guidance, and other records pertaining to meetings that included senior White House staff (particularly the Senior Staff Planning Group), members of Congress, and the public. Such meetings involved several issues of the day, including antidrug efforts, tax and budget issues, the State of the Union Address, White House public relations (including reaction to Iran-Contra), the proposed new Air Force One aircraft, and the allocation of White House office space. The material is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Box 5, cont.

| Status | Title |
|------------------|---|
| OPEN | Canada [President's Trip 04/05/1987-04/06/1987] |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Meetings |
| OPEN | DTR Planning Group Meetings (1)-(3) |

Box 6

| Status | Title |
|------------------|--|
| OPEN | Economic Summit - Venice (1987) (1)(2) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Geneva] Dennis Thomas - Geneva Trip (1) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Geneva] Dennis Thomas - Geneva Trip (2) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Geneva Events - Participants] |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Geneva] Hold for Summit Meeting (1) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Geneva] Hold for Summit Meeting (2) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Geneva Oversight Group |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Geneva Oversight Group - Dennis Thomas (1) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Geneva Oversight Group - Dennis Thomas (2) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Geneva Oversight Group - Dennis Thomas (3) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Geneva Oversight Group - Dennis Thomas (4) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Geneva Oversight Group - Dennis Thomas (5) |

Box 7

| Status | Title |
|------------------|---|
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Geneva Planning] |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Geneva Planning Meeting Agenda |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Geneva] President Reagan's Trip to Geneva, November 16-21, 1985 - Background Book [Dennis Thomas Copy] |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Geneva - Safe (1) |

| Status | Title |
|------------------|---|
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Geneva - Safe (2) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Geneva - Safe (3) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Gorbachev Visit [US-USSR Summit Planning, 1986] |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Iceland [Pre-Reykjavik Planning Meeting 10/03/1986] |
| OPEN | Jordan Arms |
| OPEN | [South Korea: Dinner with Ambassador Kim 03/15/1986] |
| OPEN | Meetings (Miscellaneous) (1)-(6) |
| OPEN | Morning & Evening Agenda Items (1) |

Box 8

| Status | Title |
|---------------|---|
| OPEN | Morning & Evening Agenda Items (2) |
| OPEN | Notes (1)-(5) |
| OPEN | [Notes (Photocopies)] (1)-(8) |
| OPEN | [Planning] Air Force One (Meetings) (1)-(4) |

Box 9

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | [Planning] Air Force One (Meetings) (5)-(9) |
| OPEN | Planning Meeting (1985) |
| OPEN | [Planning] September 1985 Plan |
| OPEN | 1986 Planning Group Meetings (1)-(6) |
| OPEN | [Planning Group] Agenda 1987 (1)-(4) |
| OPEN | Planning Group Meetings 1987 |
| OPEN | [Planning Meeting Follow-up:] Beyond the Beltway |

Box 10

| Status | Title |
|------------------|---|
| OPEN | [Reykjavik] Background Book - President's Trip to Iceland (1) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Reykjavik] Background Book - President's Trip to Iceland (2) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Reykjavik] Iceland (1) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Reykjavik] Iceland (2) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Reykjavik] Iceland (3) |

| Status | Title |
|------------------|---|
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Reykjavik] Iceland (4) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | [Reykjavik] Iceland (5) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Summer Summit [Second US-USSR Summit] (1) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Summer Summit [Second US-USSR Summit] (2) |
| OPEN | Tokyo Economic Summit: NSC Briefing Book (Binder) (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Tokyo Economic Summit: Packet I |
| OPEN | Tokyo Economic Summit: Packet II |
| OPEN | Tokyo Economic Summit: Preparations (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Tokyo Economic Summit: Trip Scheduling (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Tokyo Summit Meeting Planning Meetings |

SERIES IV: Issues File, 1985-1987

This series contains folders pertaining to specific issues, including: the federal budget (including proposed budgets and spending, the national debt, and the Gramm-Rudman Act); federal antidrug policy; tax policy, including the Tax Reform Act of 1986; Central America policy; reaction to the Iran-Contra affair by the Administration, Congress, and the media; the drafting of the 1986 and 1987 State of the Union Addresses, and public reaction to the Addresses; US trade policy, including trade sanctions against South Africa; the space shuttle *Challenger* explosion; the Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident; and the assigning of offices within the White House. The material is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Box 11

| Status | Title |
|------------------|--|
| OPEN | Agriculture (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | [Budget] (1)-(11) |
| OPEN | Budget Meetings 1986 |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Abuse Prevention 07/02/1986 (1) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Abuse Prevention 07/02/1986 (2) |

Box 12

| Status | Title |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative I (1) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative I (2) |

| Status | Title |
|------------------|---|
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative I (3) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative I (4) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative I (5) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative I (6) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative I (7) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative II (1) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative II (2) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative II (3) |
| OPEN / DIGITIZED | Drug Initiative II (4) |
| OPEN | Energy |
| OPEN | Gramm-Rudman #1 July 1985 - August 1985 (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Gramm-Rudman #2 September 1985 (1)(2) |

Box 13

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | Gramm-Rudman #2 September 1985 (3) |
| OPEN | Gramm-Rudman #3 October 1985-November 1985 (1)-(8) |
| OPEN | Gramm-Rudman December 1985 |
| OPEN | Gramm-Rudman January 1986 |
| OPEN | Gramm-Rudman February 1986 (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | [Homeless:] Mitch Snyder (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Iran [Iran-Contra] (1)-(3) |

Box 14

| Status | Title |
|---------------|---|
| OPEN | Iran [Iran-Contra] (4)-(8) |
| OPEN | Miscellaneous Issues [AIDS] |
| OPEN | Miscellaneous Issues [Nuclear Energy] |
| OPEN | Miscellaneous Issues [Sequoia (Presidential Yacht)] |
| OPEN | Miscellaneous Issues [Space Shuttle] |
| OPEN | MIA (Missing-In-Action) |
| OPEN | Nicaragua (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | OMB Appropriations |
| OPEN | OMB General Correspondence, 1985 (1)(2) |

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | OMB General Correspondence, 1986 (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | OMB General Correspondence, 1987 |
| OPEN | Oil - Issues |
| OPEN | South Africa |

Box 15

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | Space [White House] (1)(2) |
| OPEN | State of the Union 1986 I (1)-(8) |
| OPEN | State of the Union 1986 II (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | 1987 State of the Union Background Materials [and Final Version] (1)-(6) |

Box 16

| Status | Title |
|---------------|---|
| OPEN | 1987 State of the Union Background Materials [and Final Version] (7)-(11) |
| OPEN | 1987 State of the Union [Draft] (Khachigian) (1)(2) |
| OPEN | 1987 State of the Union [Draft] (Speechwriters) (1)(2) |
| OPEN | 1987 State of the Union [Draft] (Thomas) (1)-(9) |

Box 17

| Status | Title |
|---------------|---|
| OPEN | 1987 State of the Union [Draft] (Thomas) (10) |
| OPEN | 1987 State of the Union - Memorandum/Meetings (1)-(5) |
| OPEN | Tax Reform (1)-(4) |
| OPEN | Textiles |
| OPEN | Trade (1)(2) |

SERIES V: REGAN MEMORANDUM FILE, Dec. 1985 - Feb. 1987

This series contains memos from Donald Regan to Dennis Thomas. Many of the memos have attachments, which usually consist of memos and related documents involving other White House staff or OMB personnel. Topics include long-range scheduling and policy planning, Presidential scheduling for the Geneva and Reykjavik summits, the federal budget, the State of the Union Address, strategy for

public handling of Iran-Contra, the 1986 US attack on Libya, South Africa policy, antidrug policy, relations with Congress, trade policy, and the division of responsibilities among White House staff. The material is arranged chronologically by month.

Box 17, cont.

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | Regan Memorandum July 1985-December 1985 (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Regan Memorandum January 1986-March 1986 (1)-(3) |

Box 18

| Status | Title |
|---------------|---|
| OPEN | Regan Memorandum April 1986-June 1986 (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Regan Memorandum July 1986-August 1986 (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Regan Memos September 1986 (1)-(4) |
| OPEN | Regan Memorandum October 1986-December 1986 (1)-(4) |
| OPEN | Regan Memorandum January 1987 (1)(2) |
| OPEN | Regan Memorandum (Routine) (February 1987) (1) |

Box 19

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | Regan Memorandum (Routine) (February 1987) (2)-(5) |
| OPEN | Regan Memorandum (Sensitive) (1)-(3) |

SERIES VI: DISKETTE FILE

This series contains material printed from 8-inch IBM Displaywriter diskettes, the word processing system used widely by the Reagan White House. The material includes meeting agendas, responses to unsolicited personnel recommendations, general planning material for the 1986 Reykjavik summit, working papers and talking points regarding Iran-Contra, address and telephone lists, and documents apparently created by Thomas' secretary for use in her course work. The series also includes lists of document file names, instructions for printing the diskettes, and general formats for schedules and other documents. Arranged alphabetically, mostly by diskette name.

The Reagan Library staff was able to print out only some of the material from the diskettes. The staff has transferred the diskettes to preservation storage. The Library

currently does not have the ability to print any material from the IBM Displaywriter diskettes.

Box 19, cont.

| Status | Title |
|---------------|--|
| OPEN | [Diskette Box] (Diskettes Transferred to Preservation Storage) |
| OPEN | [Diskette: KLM2 Backup Documents] |
| OPEN | [Diskette: KLM3 Correspondence/Documents] (1)(2) |
| OPEN | [Diskette: KLM6] (1)-(3) |
| OPEN | Diskette Maintenance (1)-(4) |