

**Public Witness Testimony**  
**Submitted to the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Subcommittee**  
**Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Regarding FY 2019 Funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities**  
**Stephen Kidd, Executive Director, National Humanities Alliance (May 18, 2018)**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the National Humanities Alliance, with our nearly 200 member organizations, I write to express strong support for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

**For FY 2019, we respectfully urge the Subcommittee to fund the National Endowment for the Humanities at \$155 million.**

We would like to thank the Subcommittee for appropriating \$152.8 million to the NEH for FY 2018, thereby increasing the Endowment's funding by nearly \$3 million. This increase is a critical step in rebuilding the capacity of the NEH, which has been severely eroded in recent years. Even with the increase, the Endowment's current funding is 20 percent below its FY 2010 level, when adjusted for inflation. Modestly increasing the NEH's budget to \$155 million would allow the Endowment to regain its capacity to support the humanities at a time when the humanities are increasingly called upon to meet national needs.

While we recognize the difficult choices that are before this Subcommittee, we believe that expanding the capacity of the NEH should continue to be a priority. In the remainder of this testimony, I will highlight some of the many ways that the NEH serves national needs and helps accomplish critical national goals.

**NEH Serves National Needs**

The National Endowment for the Humanities' funding is distributed to the Federal/State Partnership, which supports humanities councils in every state and territory; Competitive Grants divisions, which award peer-reviewed grants in research, education, preservation, digital humanities, challenge grants, and public programs; and Chairman's Grants, which are used to pilot new programs and respond to natural disasters and other emergency situations. I will highlight just five examples of how NEH grants serve clear national needs.

*The NEH's Standing Together initiative aids veterans' reintegration into civilian life and deepens public awareness of the experience of war.*

For the past four years, the NEH has supported innovative programs that harness the power of the humanities to serve veterans. Increased appropriations over the past three years have been critical to expanding these programs, although much unmet demand continues to exist.

Dialogues on the Experience of War, an NEH initiative now in its third year, supports discussion programs for veterans and their communities. Dialogues programs have reached veterans in 18 states and the District of Columbia and will reach an additional four states in the coming year. Through this program, veterans from Northfield, Winona, and St. Paul, Minnesota were able to reflect on their experiences while connecting with non-veteran members of their communities. At the University of

Oklahoma, Norman, where 10–15% of the student population is made up of veterans, a Dialogues program helped veteran students and faculty examine their experiences through history, literature, and film.

Other efforts funded through the Standing Together initiative include programs that help document and preserve veterans' life experiences. For instance, a grant to Lewiston-Auburn College in Lewiston, Maine, supported a program for preserving veterans' heirlooms and concluded with an exhibition and event honoring local veterans. Veterans from across the nation benefit from intensive college-preparation programs and training for Veteran Affairs staff that helps them understand veterans' experiences.

*The NEH supports the documentation and teaching of native languages, history, and culture.*

Since 2006, the NEH has provided \$11.4 million in support of its Documenting Endangered Languages program. The NEH-funded *Klallam Dictionary* documents the language of the Klallam Tribes at Elwha, Jamestown, and Port Gamble, Washington. A 2013 grant is helping researchers at the University of Maine, Orono develop the *Penobscot Dictionary* with the nearby Penobscot Nation. Dictionaries and other tools created by the grants are used by Native American tribes and organizations to help revitalize their languages.

Meanwhile, a series of NEH grants have supported research on and the preservation of Native American cultures at the University of Oklahoma since 1972. Grants have supported the conservation of Native American art and, most recently, a project planning for a Native American music archive at the Sam Noble Museum. At nearby Pawnee College, a new NEH grant is helping the school integrate Pawnee language, history, and culture into its natural science courses.

And in Salt Lake City, an NEH grant helped the Natural History Museum of Utah implement its *Native Voices* exhibition. *Native Voices* showcases Native American perspectives and documents the personal accounts of tribal leaders and community representatives. At the same time, it ensures that Native American communities feel welcomed and accurately represented by the museum—museum attendance has risen since the exhibition opened.

These are only a few of the many grants that the NEH leverages to support Native American communities, document their culture, and make sure that their experiences are represented in the history of our nation.

*The NEH is the only entity, federal or private, with a national mandate to ensure that the humanities serve all Americans.*

Through a partnership with Missouri's Mid-America Arts Alliance, the NEH on the Road program ensures that high-quality museum exhibitions—originally curated with NEH support—reach all parts of the country. Fifty-three percent of the communities served have a population under 50,000. In Red Cloud, Nebraska, a community of only 1,020, more than 3,000 people saw *Our Lives, Our Stories: America's Greatest Generation*. The exhibition traveled to 23 other locations including Boise, Idaho and Tulsa, Oklahoma. Additionally, between 2014 and 2024, *Spirited: Prohibition in America*, will travel to 48 sites, including Greenville, North Carolina and Fallon, Nevada.

The NEH provides critical support to rural institutions, establishing the cultural infrastructure necessary for thriving communities. At Great Basin College in Elko, Nevada, an NEH grant helped establish the Virtual Humanities Center (VHC), which provides humanities access to an 86,000 square mile area in

rural Nevada. Additionally, the technological upgrades made through the grant help the many local organizations that use the college's lecture halls broadcast their meetings.

NEH grants have also helped Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio establish endowments for a biomedical ethics program and a community reading program while leveraging an additional \$782,000 in support. At the Entrada Institute in Torrey, Utah, an NEH grant is advancing programs for disadvantaged rural youth and their families. And to ensure a wide reach, the NEH has dedicated funding lines for innovation in humanities curricula in community colleges, HBCUs, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and Tribal Colleges.

*The NEH safeguards our historical and cultural legacies.*

With grants to historical societies, historic sites, archives, and town and county record offices around the country, the NEH ensures that historical documents and artifacts are preserved under the proper conditions and accessible in the long-term. For example, a grant to Idaho State University in Pocatello, Idaho helped the Eli M. Oboler Library assess its vast and fragile collection of images and papers related to the history of the intermountain west. The library now has the knowledge necessary to care for its collection and has secured internal funding in order to do so. Through the NEH's preservation assistance grants, organizations in every state have undertaken similar work.

The NEH enables the digitization of historical newspapers from around the country through the National Digital Newspaper Program—a massive undertaking. For example, grants to the University of California, Riverside have supported the California Digital Newspaper Project, which has digitized 3,628,495 pages of California newspapers published since 1846. To date, the NEH has provided support for the digitization of approximately 11 million pages of newspapers published between 1690 and 1963—making these resources accessible for scholars, students, and anyone interested in researching local history or genealogy.

Through its Common Heritage program, the NEH awards small grants for public programs that help people preserve their family heirlooms and other valued possessions while contributing copies to digital archives. A program held by the University of Nevada, Reno collected photographic images of the North Lake Tahoe area; another, held by the Makah Cultural Heritage Center in Neah Bay, Washington, helped the Native American community digitize their heirlooms while learning to protect their possessions from humidity and natural disaster. Common Heritage awards have been made to 84 communities in 28 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico since 2016.

The NEH supports the publication of documents associated with important historical figures and events and ensures that they are widely accessible. From the best-selling autobiography of Mark Twain, to the collected papers of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John and Abigail Adams, Albert Einstein, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the NEH ensures that these historically significant materials are available to all Americans.

*With a modest investment, the NEH stimulates private, local investment in the humanities and cultivates tourism.*

NEH matching grants over the last 50 years have generated more than \$4 billion in nonfederal donations to humanities projects and institutions. The NEH's investments in museums, historic sites, research, and the preservation of historic artifacts have played a key role in developing local cultural heritage tourism economies, which attract 78% of all leisure travelers. Over several decades, for example, the NEH has supported the development of new exhibitions at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. These grants have had an outsized impact on the local economy as Monticello welcomes nearly 400,000 annual visitors, 93% of

whom are from outside Virginia and 50% of whom stay in a hotel for at least one night, adding at least \$13.1 million to the local economy. In Dubuque, Iowa, NEH investment in the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium has helped turn a small local historical society into a nationally-significant tourist site that generates \$10 million per year for the city's economy.

Similar, catalyzing grants are made all over the nation. NEH grants to the Toledo Museum of Art have spurred \$2.6 million in outside investments supporting preservation, exhibition development, and public programs. A grant to the Museum of Idaho in Idaho Falls has helped the organization raise more than \$1.5 million—with this funding, the museum is undertaking a renovation that will nearly double its size and better serve its community. In St. Paul, NEH grants have helped the Minnesota History Center develop record-breaking exhibitions that have since traveled the nation. And a grant to Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia is helping support the public history and tourism app, Clio, enabling staff to create more than 24 digital, interactive heritage trails in the state.

From funding professional development programs for teachers that celebrate the history of our nation to supporting collaborative, interdisciplinary archaeological research that has led to new understanding of heart disease, each year the NEH awards hundreds of competitive, peer-reviewed grants to individual scholars and a broad range of nonprofit educational organizations around the country. Grantees include universities, two- and four-year colleges, humanities centers, research institutes, museums, historical societies, libraries, archives, scholarly associations, K–12 schools, local education agencies, public television/film/radio producers, and more.

The NEH supports the preservation of collections that would be otherwise lost, path-breaking research that brings critical knowledge to light, programs for teachers that enrich instruction in schools, and public programs that reach individuals and communities in every district in the country.

Overall, the NEH's support is crucial for building and sustaining humanities infrastructure in all 50 states, serving American citizens at all stages of life.

### **Conclusion**

We recognize that Congress faces difficult choices in allocating funds in this and coming years. We ask the Subcommittee to consider modestly increased funding for the humanities through the NEH as an investment in opportunity for all Americans, innovation and economic growth, and strengthening our communities. Thank you for your consideration of our request and for your past and continued support for the humanities.

*Founded in 1981, the National Humanities Alliance advances national humanities policy in the areas of research, preservation, public programming, and teaching. Nearly 200 organizations are members of NHA, including scholarly associations, humanities research centers, colleges, universities, and organizations of museums, libraries, historical societies, humanities councils, and higher education institutions.*