

**National Humanities Alliance
Testimony Submitted to the
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services & General Government
Regarding FY 2013 Funding for the
National Historical Publications & Records Commission within the
National Archives & Records Administration**

May 4, 2012

For FY 2013 the National Humanities Alliance strongly urges the Subcommittee to provide at least \$5 million (level funding) for the grants program of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). Unfortunately, the Administration's FY 2013 budget requests only \$3 million for the NHPRC, an amount that will not support the ongoing programs and mission of the Commission at even a minimal level. The NHPRC is funded at \$5 million for FY 2012. This figure represents a \$2.0 million cut from the FY 2011 level of \$7.0 million (and a decrease of \$8.0 million from the FY 2010 level of \$13.0 million). We ask that Congress preserve this program, which has already been cut substantially in previous fiscal years.

For years the NHPRC has been threatened with elimination, and inflation has seriously eroded its funding level in constant dollars. For example, the \$3 million proposed by the Administration equals the funding level the NHPRC received in fiscal year 1983. Just to keep pace with inflation since 1983, the NHPRC would have to receive \$6.8 million in FY 2013. With an appropriation of only \$3 million, the NHPRC will be hard pressed to support its ongoing programs and mission, let alone fund any new projects.

Commonly referred to as the 'grant-making' arm of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the NHPRC was established by Congress in 1934, along with NARA, to promote the preservation and use of the American documentary record. This small grants program enables the National Archives to provide national leadership through grants that support exploration of major archival issues, such as preservation of electronic records, disaster preparedness and coordination and communication among archivists nationwide.

The NHPRC was the first granting agency to recognize the serious challenges posed in preserving electronic records. The NHPRC has supported projects such as intensive training for managing electronic records, and development of techniques for preserving and making these records accessible. A major strength of such projects is the identification of processes and approaches that can be implemented by additional archival organizations. This far extends the reach and impact of funding.

The NHPRC also provides grants to documentary editions (print and electronic) of the papers of nationally significant individuals and institutions. Examples include the Ratification of the U.S. Constitution project, the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, and the Papers of George Washington. NHPRC has also funded an ongoing project to make the papers of the Founding Fathers available for free online. In fact, the NHPRC is committed to promoting increased public access to all of the publications it funds through digitization and the creation of educational resources.

NHPRC grants leverage state, local, institutional, foundation, and other private funding by requiring 50% cost sharing. For every federal dollar invested, another dollar is spent. NHPRC funding is the linchpin of most projects' funding structures and without federal dollars even long-standing existing projects could be terminated.

A perfect example is the First Federal Congress Project (FFCP) whose mission is to collect, research, edit and publish the *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress 1789-1791* (DHFFC). Twenty out of a projected 22 volumes of the DHFFC have already been published, yet without continued NHPRC support it is possible the final two volumes of the edition might never be published.

NHPRC grants also provide the Archivist of the United States with his primary tool for providing national leadership and promoting national and regional cooperation among the state archivists to address common issues such as electronic records and disaster recovery. For example, following Hurricane Katrina a small NHPRC grant to the Council of State Archivists allowed archivists to meet and identify needs for training and information to prevent the tremendous loss of essential vital records in the affected areas. That small investment of NHPRC funds led to a multi-million dollar disaster-preparedness project with FEMA and the distribution of training to over 4,000 records and emergency managers in all 50 states.

In the context of the current economic crisis, it is also important to note that NHPRC grants play an important role in supporting hundreds of jobs for historians, editors, librarians, archivists, and conservators across the United States each year. NHPRC grants leverage significant non-federal funding in the form of contributions and in-kind institutional support. As the impact of the economic recession deepens for higher education institutions and non-profit organizations around the country, evidence is mounting that humanities departments and programs have been especially hard hit. For example, major scholarly societies are reporting dramatic drops in job listings for faculty teaching positions, with devastating implications for younger scholars entering today's job market. NHPRC grant money can be used to fund the hiring and training of scholars and humanities professionals working at a broad range of institutions, from colleges and universities, to libraries, museums, archives and special collections. As such, the NHPRC represents a vital and increasingly scarce source of funding for sponsored research in the humanities, as well as an equally rare source of support and stimulus for non-academic career paths.

While millions of federal dollars are (rightly) invested in training and recruiting talented students for math, science, and engineering careers, parallel opportunities do not exist for the humanities, despite repeated calls by higher education and business leaders (as well as scientists) for cultivation of a broadly-educated workforce, to ensure America's competitiveness in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century. It is also worth noting that many NHPRC projects support paid and unpaid internships for undergraduates, providing these students with an opportunity to engage in a range of early professional activities, from collaborative research and writing projects, to preservation and archival work, to new information technologies. In addition to historical resources made available for educational use, many of these same NHPRC-supported projects and institutions also have formal outreach programs to K-12 schools,

providing another point of engagement with subject matter and role models for young people who might not otherwise be exposed to the full range of academic pursuits and career paths possible for them.

In conclusion, NHPRC grants have had a tremendous positive impact across our nation on preserving our documentary heritage, laying the foundation for educational tools to bring documents into classrooms at all levels, making documentary resources readily accessible to a wide variety of audiences, and supports a competitive workforce. Without this federal leadership, most nationwide and regional archival cooperation would be threatened.

Located in Washington, DC, the National Humanities Alliance was founded in 1981 to advance public support for the humanities. With more than 100 organizational and institutional members, the Alliance encompasses a broad range of humanities-related disciplines and institutions, and is the only organization that represents the humanities community as a whole. The Alliance is online at www.nhalliance.org.