

**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
& GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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**REGARDING FISCAL YEAR 2009 FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS
ADMINISTRATION AND THE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDS
COMMISSION**

APRIL 30, 2008

Chairman Serrano and Members of the Subcommittee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) in support of increased funding for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) for fiscal year 2009. We support the Administration's proposed increase in FY 2009 of \$12.78 million for NARA's operating expenses and \$8.98 for the Electronic Records Archives (ERA). We urge Congress to fully fund the President's request for these accounts. However, we strongly oppose the President's proposed elimination of the National Historical Publication and Records Commission, NARA's grant-making arm. We urge Congress to restore funding for this program at a level of at least \$10 million for national grants, and \$2 million for staffing.

NARA Operating Expenses

The President has requested \$404 million for NARA's FY 2009 budget, including \$327.78 million for operating expenses. This represents an increase of \$12.78 million for operations over the previous fiscal year, including \$6.86 million for inflationary costs. The remaining increase will enable NARA to supplement staff needed to process and declassify Presidential records, prepare for the George W. Bush Presidential library, and improve security. We see this as the *minimum* increase necessary for the National Archives to carry out its mission of "ready access" to essential records that document the rights of citizens, the actions of government, and our nation's history.

Over the last decade, the volume of material generated by the Federal government, particularly electronic records, has increased dramatically. We are concerned that without additional resources—and despite the best efforts of the National Archives to cut costs and increase efficiencies—NARA will continue to fall behind in its ability to process and provide access to government records.

In recent years, NARA's Presidential Library system has been unable to keep up with overall demand for records, processing of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, or review of records for declassification. The Reagan and Bush Presidential libraries, for example, estimate that the backlogs of requests now average five years for classified records and four years for unclassified records. In 2006, the first year that the Clinton administration's records became subject to the FOIA, the Clinton Library received 336 requests involving 9.6 million pages of textual records. The Archives is now preparing for the largest transfer of electronic records in

its history from the George W. Bush administration in January, 2009. We support the administration's request, at a minimum, for an additional 15 FTE's for Presidential records processing and declassification, and 24 FTE's to staff and operate the Bush Presidential Materials Project. NARA is experiencing a significant backlog of unprocessed records from *all* branches of government, not just Presidential records. The Archives has stated unambiguously that without a significant increase in staff resources to process and declassify materials, the volume of records unavailable to the public will continue to grow.

The humanities community has strongly supported the mission of the National Archives since it was established by Congress in 1934. Policymakers, scholars, journalists, filmmakers and others use the records maintained by NARA to enhance public understanding and evaluation of our civic institutions, the decisions of our leaders, and the experience of our citizens. As a nation, we rely on the research and analysis made possible by NARA to hold government accountable to the people, and to make better decisions for the future. There is great demand for NARA materials. During FY 2007 alone, the National Archives responded to 1.2 million written requests, and served over 135,000 researchers in Washington, DC, and around the country. We deeply appreciate the increase provided by Congress in FY 2008 to restore research hours in NARA facilities that had been cut in 2006, and are pleased that the funding proposed by the Administration for FY 2009 will allow current research hours to be maintained.

National Historical Publications and Records Commission

For the fourth year in a row, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) has been zeroed out in the President's budget request. We strongly urge Congress to restore funding for NHPRC in FY 2009 at a level of \$12 million, including \$10 million for grants and \$2 million for administration of the program (an increase of \$2.5 in grant funds over FY 2008). This amount would bring funding for NHPRC grants to the fully authorized level of \$10 million, last reached in FY 2004. We deeply appreciate Congress' restoration of funding for NHPRC in FY 2008 and recent years.

The NHPRC is the grant-making arm of NARA established in 1964 to promote preservation and access to America's documentary heritage. While it is a relatively small program, the NHPRC is a vital component of the National Archives. Over the last forty years, NHPRC has made grants to more than 4,200 state and local archives, colleges and universities, libraries and historical societies, and other non-profit organizations. This funding has:

- supported online and text publication of historical records
- preserved thousands of historical collections
- increased public access and use of archives and records
- trained scores of archivists and documentary editors

Produced under modern, rigorous documentary editing standards, NHPRC-supported publication projects make important materials, including papers and other documents from all periods of American history, more accessible to an ever-widening audience. Since its founding, the Commission has sponsored 296 publications projects, which have produced nearly 900 volumes and over 9,000 reels of microfilm. These projects have provided the backbone of research further utilized by scholars, students, teachers, documentary filmmakers, museum curators,

genealogists, and the general public. Books such as Stephen Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage* (based on the journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition) and David McCullough's biography of *John Adams* would not have been possible without the annotated editions that result from NHPRC grants.

NHPRC awards, which require significant cost-sharing on the part of grantees, enable institutions to leverage federal dollars with significant, non-federal contributions (almost 50%, on average). The NHPRC grant helps to ensure funders that projects are of genuine significance, capably staffed, and well-organized. Loss of NHPRC funding will have a domino effect on grantees, causing funding from other sources to be withdrawn or reduced, making it impossible for work on many publication projects to continue.

We feel strongly that the NHPRC should be able to continue its important work in preserving and providing access to historical records, promoting regional coordination in matters related to archives (including disaster preparedness and handling of electronic media), and supporting professional development for archivists, records managers, and historical editors.

Electronic Records Archive

The President's FY 2009 Budget requests \$67.01 million in funding for NARA's Electronic Records Archives (ERA), an increase of \$8.98 million over the previous year. We strongly support the requested increase for ERA. Currently under development, the Electronic Records Archives will provide a rigorous system to capture the growing volume of electronic information and records generated by all branches of government, regardless of original format. Increased funding will enable the National Archives to process more electronic records, enroll more federal agencies in electronic records scheduling, and enhance public access to search and indexing features. The humanities community is especially interested in the benefits and implications of this new system for educators and researchers. We are encouraged that NARA reports that the new system will be prepared to handle the transfer of the Bush administration records in 2009.

Office of Government Information Services

In 2007, Congress passed the Open Government Act (P.L. 110-175), which established an Office of Government Information Services within the National Archives and Records Administration to oversee and improve compliance with the Freedom of Information Act. We are disappointed that the administration has not provided funding for this office in the Archives' FY 2009 budget. We urge Congress to provide additional funding to NARA for FY 2009 to ensure that the duties of the OGIS are carried out as called for in the Open Government Act of 2007.

Public Outreach and Education

The National Archives is perhaps best known to many Americans, through visits to Washington and popular culture, for its role protecting and displaying the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. The National Archives expands its reach to Americans through a variety of public and educational programs that promote civic literacy and engagement.

The National Archives Experience in Washington, DC seeks to “open the stacks” of the Archives and enable millions of visitors to interact personally with the original records of our democracy through exhibits and learning experiences at the Archives on the National Mall. NARA is working to expand its reach beyond Washington through traveling exhibitions, programmatic partnerships with the Presidential Libraries and Archives Regional Facilities, technology initiatives, and expanded educational activities at partner sites across the country. For example, the National Archives is currently working with teachers and students around the country—through learning centers at many Presidential Libraries and a new center at the National Archives in Washington—to help them use primary documents to make the study of history and civics more engaging.

In FY 2007, the National Archives attracted nearly 220,000 participants to public programs, and hosted 2.9 million visitors at museum exhibits in Washington, DC and the Presidential libraries. The NARA website received 35 million visits.

Summary

The National Archives and Records Administration serves an extensive community, including: genealogists, family historians, veterans, academics, business and occupational researchers, publication and broadcast journalists, Congress, the Courts, the White House, public officials, Federal agencies, state and local government personnel, professional organizations, students, and teachers. The public and scholars benefit from the use of historical documents and records for a myriad of purposes including evaluation of government performance, academic study, the publication of books, production of documentary films, and museum exhibits. We praise NARA for its efforts to meet the growing and ever-changing challenges associated with securing, storing, and maintaining the records and facilities under its care.

Thank you for consideration of our request for increased funding for the National Archives in FY 2009. We appreciate the Subcommittee's support for our nation's documentary heritage through the National Archives and Records Administration.

Sincerely,



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The National Humanities Alliance is a coalition of more than ninety leading nonprofit organizations and institutions dedicated to the advancement of education, research, preservation, and public programs in national and federal humanities policy. Its members include: scholarly and professional associations; higher education associations; organizations of museums, libraries, historical societies and state humanities councils; university-based and independent humanities research centers.