

**TESTIMONY SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY, & HOUSING AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT, THE JUDICIARY, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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**REGARDING FISCAL YEAR 2007 FUNDING FOR THE
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION**

APRIL 14, 2006

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the American Library Association (ALA), Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) in support of increased operational funding for the fiscal year 2007 budget of the National Archives and Records Administration. We also urge Congress to support a FY 2007 funding level of at least \$12 million for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission within NARA, for which no funding was provided in the President's budget request. Of this \$12 million, we support \$10 million for national grants, including funding for a new state formula grant program that includes archival disaster planning and \$2 million that is needed for essential staffing and necessary administration-related costs.

The Humanities and Library Communities Support NARA

The humanities and library communities support the NARA mission of "ready access" to essential records that document the rights of citizens, the actions of Government, and the American experience. As our nation's record keeper, NARA serves to document the rights and entitlements of U.S. citizens and hold government accountable to the people. The National Archives serves an extensive community. Genealogists, family historians, veterans, academics, scholars, historians, business and occupational researchers, publication and broadcast journalists, Congress, the Courts, the White House, public officials, Federal Government agencies, state and local government personnel, professional organizations, students, teachers, and the general public all make use of services provided by the National Archives and Records Administration. The public and scholars benefit from the use of historical documents and records for a myriad of purposes including academic analysis, the publication of books, production of documentary film, and museum exhibits.

NARA's Important Role

NARA does not simply store our country's records, it also provides a variety of services. Perhaps the Agency is best known for its role protecting and displaying the Declaration of Independence, the

Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. In addition to making these documents available to more than one million people a year, NARA also preserves and provides access to documents for military personnel. NARA holds the military service records of 56 million veterans and ensures that they can access these records when necessary to obtain their benefits. The Agency responds to more than one million requests a year for information from their copies of Official Military Personnel Files.

NARA also develops education, outreach, and partnership initiatives that contribute to civic literacy in this country. One way the Agency does this is through programs at the Presidential Libraries, which NARA oversees. Since 2001, over 18,000 students have participated in an experiential learning program at the White House Decision Center (WHDC) at the Truman Library and Museum in Independence, MO. The WHDC lets students work in a mock West Wing, reading copies of actual historical documents, analyzing policy options, and making recommendations to the President. History comes alive for these students as they learn about government, the presidency, teamwork, problem solving, communication, and leadership.

NARA is also actively involved in National History Day, a yearlong educational program that engages students and highlights the discovery and interpretation of history. NARA staff provide workshops for teachers, contribute lesson plans, help students do archival research, serve as judges for local and state contests, and host concerts.

In its role as “First Preserver,” NARA acts in times of emergency to assist governments save critical records. NARA partnered with professional archival and records management organizations to provide assistance in the preservation and conservation of records damaged in last year’s hurricanes. The Agency is currently working with FEMA in New Orleans on records recovery and the State of Mississippi to provide training for records recovery.

Electronic Records Administration

On September 8, 2005, NARA announced that it had awarded a development contract for the Electronic Records Archives (ERA). More and more people are using the services of the National Archives and Records Administration. The ERA will open access to many items in the collections and solve the problem of how to preserve the increasing amount of electronic records in our government. The goal of the system is to capture electronic information in any format, save it permanently, and make it accessible on the current hardware or software of the day. The humanities and library communities are especially interested in the benefits and implications of this new system.

Continued Challenges

We praise NARA for its efforts to meet the omnipresent challenges associated with securing, storing, and maintaining the records and facilities under its purview. NARA needs sustained funding and support from the federal government in order to stay abreast of the increasing demand for its services and changing technology.

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission

For the second year in a row, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) has been zeroed out in the President’s budget request. The NHPRC is the small grant-making arm of NARA and for the past four decades has awarded more than \$153 million to more than 4,000 state and local government archives, colleges and universities, and individuals to preserve and publish important historical records documenting American history. Books by scholarly and popular authors such as David McCullough’s *John Adams* would not have been possible without the

type of documentary editions that result from the NHPRC. The NHPRC is the only grant-making organization, public or private, dedicated solely to publishing the papers of significant figures and themes in American history.

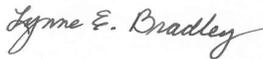
We feel strongly that the NHPRC should be able to continue its important work in preserving historical records, promoting regional coordination in matters related to archives, and supporting a variety of other efforts related to America's documentary heritage.

Recent NHPRC grants have helped Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas assess the damage to archives and records after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The NHPRC staff hopes to continue to assist states with their disaster preparedness in relation to vital and historical records.

Loss of NHPRC funding will have a domino effect and cause funding from other sources to be reduced or withdrawn completely. NHPRC grants are the linchpins for the funding structure of most of these projects. The NHPRC is a vital component of NARA, helping fulfill its mission to ensure that the American public has ready access to essential evidence that documents the rights of citizens, the actions of Government officials, and the national experience.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We appreciate the support of this subcommittee for our nation's cultural and intellectual resources through the National Archives and Records Administration and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

Sincerely, _____



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The American Library Association is the oldest and largest library association in the world, with more than 64,000 members. Its mission is "to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.

The Association of Research Libraries is a nonprofit organization of 123 research libraries in North America. ARL influences the changing environment of scholarly communication and the public policies that affect research libraries and the diverse communities they serve. ARL pursues this mission by advancing the goals of its member research libraries, providing leadership in public and information policy to the scholarly and higher education communities, fostering the exchange of ideas and expertise, and shaping a future environment that leverages its interests with those of allied organizations.

The National Humanities Alliance is a coalition of nearly ninety leading nonprofit organizations 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.