

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

BY

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**REGARDING FISCAL YEAR 2008 FUNDING FOR THE
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION**

APRIL 16, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the National Humanities Alliance (NHA) in **support of increased operational funding for the fiscal year 2008 budget of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)**. While we are pleased that the President has proposed an overall increase of nearly twelve percent for NARA's FY 2008 budget, we are disappointed to see that this increase does not provide enough funds to sustain the agency and its ability to realize its mission of "ready access" to essential records that document the rights of citizens, the actions of Government, and the American experience.

The proposed increase will not restore the nearly 10 percent decline in staff nor restore the public hours of access cut by a third this year. Furthermore, unless this increase is sustained in future years, the erosion of access will continue. The volume of material created by the Federal government has increased substantially over the last decade. Consequently, the amount of material to be archived has increased proportionately. However, the number of archivists to process these papers and make them available to the public has decreased. Without substantial increases in the number of staff at the National Archives, the volume of records unavailable to the public will continue to grow.

The public deserves online access to public records and to our historical documents. Unfortunately, few funds have been appropriated to the National Archives to ready their records for online posting. The National Archives is struggling to make available electronically a vast number of records and documents as quickly as possible; however, even if the agency reaches its goal, only about 1 percent will be available online. The President's request does not provide adequate funds for necessary digitization of records at the National Archives.

We also urge Congress to support a FY 2008 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 and \$2 million that is needed for essential staffing and necessary administration-related costs.

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission

For the third 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 NHPRC grants. As the only grant-making organization, public or private, dedicated solely to publishing the papers of significant figures and themes in American history, the NHPRC provides unique and valuable services and resources to the humanities community.

NHPRC grants are the linchpins for the funding structure of most of these documentary editing projects. Loss of NHPRC funding will have a domino effect and cause funding from other sources to be reduced or withdrawn completely. 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.

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.

Continued Challenges & the Need for Sustained Support

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. It is likely that operating expenses will continue to soar and technology demands will continue to increase. The Archives is falling behind in its ability to process existing and new records and requires a long-term investment to ensure adequate staffing and maintenance of aging facilities at regional archives buildings and throughout the Presidential library system. It is extremely important that NARA has the continuous resources necessary to ensure that our nation's records are properly cared for in order to guarantee citizens' rights, preserve our history, and hold government accountable.

The Humanities Community Supports NARA

The humanities community supports the NARA mission. 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 Urgent Role

NARA does not simply store our country's records, it also provides a variety of services, in addition to archiving and providing access to important documents. 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 the 2005 hurricanes.

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.

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,



Jessica Jones Irons
Executive Director
National Humanities Alliance

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.