

**TESTIMONY ON THE FY-2002 APPROPRIATION FOR THE  
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES  
PRESENTED TO THE  
INTERIOR & RELATED AGENCIES SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE BY THE NATIONAL HUMANITIES ALLIANCE  
16 APRIL 2001**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

The National Humanities Alliance is pleased to submit testimony in support of the National Endowment for the Humanities on behalf of the NHA membership of eighty-seven scholarly and professional associations; organizations of museums, libraries, historical societies, higher education, and state humanities councils; university-based and independent humanities research centers and others concerned with national cultural policies. A list of NHA member organizations is attached.

First, a word about the humanities and how we think about them. Congress enacted the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 in order "to promote progress and scholarship in the humanities and the arts in the United States." This act established the National Endowment for the Humanities as an independent grant-making agency of the federal government to support research, education, and public programs in the humanities. In that legislation, Congress defines the term humanities as "the study of the following: languages, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism, and theory of the arts; and those aspects of the social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods."

In a 1987 report entitled "The Humanities and the American Promise," the result of a colloquium funded, in part, by NEH, Merrill Peterson, a University of Virginia historian provides a definition of the humanities in terms of its practical importance to democracy, as well as to the intellectual life of each citizen that is probably more illuminating than the statutory description:

...we think it is misleading to regard the humanities basically as a set of academic disciplines or, even more restricting, as a set of "great books". We identify them, rather, with certain ways of thinking--of inquiring, evaluating, judging, finding, and articulating meaning. They include the developed human talents from which texts and disciplines spring. They are, taken together, the necessary resources of a reflective approach to life. The value of a reflective approach can be best appreciated by considering the alternative: a life unilluminated by reasoning -- in short, the "unexamined life" that Socrates described as not worth living. Where the humanities are vigorous, action follows from and is guided by reflection. It is their capacity to change, elevate, and improve both the common civic life and individual lives that make the cultivation of the humanities important to the American people.

While the administration's support for the National Endowment for the Humanities in its FY-2002 budget proposal is welcome and shows recognition of the critical role that NEH plays in preserving our historic and cultural record, improving education at all levels, and helping Americans to better understand their lives and the life of their nation, the proposal of \$120.5 million for the agency does not provide enough for the agency to fully play the role for which it was created. Mr. Chairman, we urge you and your colleagues to increase the President's request for FY-2002 to \$150 million. As the chart below illustrates, the ravages of inflation have worn upon the NEH in a particularly harsh fashion -- Basically, the NEH is trying to carry out its important mandate with approximately one-third of the funding in constant dollars that it commanded 20 years ago.

**Table:** Appropriations for NEH in constant FY 2001 dollars (5-Year Intervals, in millions of dollars)

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>Actual</b>	8.9	79.1	150.1	139.5	156.9	172.0	115.3	120.0
<b>Constant</b>	41.3	267.4	343.7	230.2	216.5	199.5	118.8	120.0

Note: Constant dollar values reflect the November CPI-U, AGS - 2000

We also wish to take this opportunity to urge the committee to increase FY-2002 appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts and the museum portion of the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Mr. Chairman, we recognize the pressures that you and your colleagues are enduring in the appropriations process. Nonetheless, we urge you to do the very best that you can to fund critically needed increases for these agencies.

The plans communicated to the committee by NEH are sound -- and we believe that the increase we are recommending would strengthen the core programs at NEH which are so important to the humanities enterprise and to the millions of Americans who benefit from those activities. At the same time, a \$30M increase would permit the important initiatives undertaken by Chairman Bill Ferris over the last three years to move forward with more strength and timeliness (e.g., Regional Humanities Centers initiative). We want to emphasize that when we talk about the cost of virtually level funding in recent years for NEH -- even with the modest increases of the last two years -- we are talking about costs to Americans in terms of quality of teaching in schools, in terms of preservation of our cultural heritage, and in terms of educational films, museum exhibitions, library programs, and other programs aimed at making the humanities accessible to all.

NEH and Education - Although education in the United States is primarily a state and local matter, the Federal Government plays a variety of important roles in education through the US Department of Education, and key agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In recent years, public opinion polls indicate that Americans want the Federal Government to increase support activities aimed at strengthening education at all levels. NEH has supported a wide variety of projects in virtually all of its grant-making programs, geared toward strengthening teaching and learning in schools and colleges, making technology more accessible and effective as a tool for better education, and providing adults with continuing education such as augmenting formal school education with informal learning in museums, libraries, state humanities council programs, and other settings. The core of NEH is preserving the nation's cultural heritage and advancing scholarship and education. The organizational scheme of NEH lends itself to supporting a wide range of educational projects and initiatives, with support drawn from every division. Although the Department of Education has vastly more funding for education, NEH through its meticulous peer review process is able to bring a focus and continuity to its education projects which is only rarely possible in programs of the federal education department.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future released a report in 1996 called "What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future" with this fundamental finding: "What teachers know is the most important influence on what students learn." NEH Summer Seminars and Institutes are a low cost but highly effective way for NEH to address the critical need for better teaching in US schools and colleges. NEH Seminars and Institutes offer college school teachers opportunities to study significant topics and fundamental texts in the humanities and to revitalize their understanding of history, literature, and other humanities subjects. These residential summer projects give teachers assembled from throughout the country access to important humanities

scholarship and to effective ways of conveying it. Teachers who are excited about the subjects they teach communicate their enthusiasm to students, making the classroom an exhilarating place while also fostering understanding and retention of the material that is taught.

In the summer of 2001, NEH will sponsor a total of 54 seminars and institutes (funded in the FY 2000 budget). According to NEH, 550 school teachers and 470 college teachers have enrolled for programs beginning this June. Over the course of the next school year (2001-2002), these teachers will have reached an estimated 68,750 K-12 students and 82,250 college and university students. Unfortunately, the number of seminars and institutes funded represents less than half the number that could have taken place (the program received 133 high-quality applications to direct seminars and institutes in FY 2000).

NEH estimates that at the requested budget level for FY 2001 (\$120 million), it will be able to fund 50-52 summer seminars and institutes. In contrast, NEH has estimated that at a funding level of \$150 million, it would be able to provide 62 summer seminars and institutes, serving approximately 1,190 K-12 and college-level teachers, who in turn would teach 180,000 individual students during the course of the next school year. It is worth noting as well that in the summer of 1995, with a FY 1994 budget of \$177.5 million, NEH was able to fund 167 seminars and institutes serving nearly 3000 teachers across the country.

Each year, NEH receives enthusiastic and glowing feedback from teachers around the country who completed seminars and institutes over the summer. The following are some examples of comments received by NEH from teacher participants in the 2000 summer seminars and institutes.

"Upon my return to the classroom, I was able to immediately put into practice knowledge and skills learned during the seminar. My students have already produced one class 'book' as a result of compiling research in preparation for study of a historical fiction novel. We used the same format for research, discussion, and publication as was demonstrated by my peers and the director in the seminar." (Teacher from Texas, Seminar on the Great Plains)

"I am excited about incorporating my Renaissance experience into my school year. On a personal level, I find that the institute permeates my consciousness. More importantly, however, my sense of the importance of teaching the humanities has been renewed, and I am more zealous than ever about the role that they should play in everyone's life." (Teacher from Missouri, Institute on Worlds of the Renaissance)

"One of the most impressive aspects of the Institute was the formidable amount of information our instructors gave us. Our contacts with this dynamic group of scholars gave our understanding of the Encounter depth and breadth that would be unattainable anywhere else. Converging Cultures has profoundly inspired me to continue and to expand my own scholarly endeavors. As a better scholar, I will be a better teacher." (Teacher from Maine)

Other examples of NEH activities that strengthen education include:

Scholarly Resources - *Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867* is an NEH-supported project that uncovered, transcribed, and interpreted letters, affidavits, and other kinds of direct testimony made by slaves and ex-slaves during and after the Civil War. This five-volume resource has transformed our understanding of emancipation and freedom. Documents from the project are being used in college and secondary school classrooms as background for books on topics such as the Civil War, African-American history aimed at young readers, and to script dramatic readings of slave testimonies for radio broadcast. In addition, these materials have been used in museum and library exhibits. Historian Eric Foner drew upon the materials in preparing his widely acclaimed new book *The Story of American Freedom*.

Technology for Education - NEH has played a leading role in helping school teachers, as well as scholars, make more effective use of technologies. As computers, Internet connections and the like spread through American schools, the endowment staff realized that the lack of significant content threatened to discredit the superb access such innovations provide. An NEH initiative that is really helping teachers to make technology work for them is EDSITEMent, a resource developed to provide teachers, educational administrators, and lifelong learners with access to the highest quality humanities web-sites and, importantly, tools to make effective use of the digital information in the classroom. The EDSITEMent program, which is a collaboration among NEH, MCI WorldCom, and the National Trust for the Humanities, was developed using NEH's peer review process along with advice from scholars, teachers, superintendents, parent-teacher associations, and others. NEH has culled 102 sites from among the 66,000 sites identified as educational on the Web -- and has plans to identify an additional 100 sites this year. The sites cover the fields of social studies, history, literature, foreign languages, and art and culture. Address: <<http://edsitement.neh.gov>>. There have been highly favorable reactions to EDSITEMent, e.g., from a Georgia teacher:

...I have struck a gold mine of great information. Thank you tremendously for the splendid work you are doing. I really appreciate you, and will definitely commend you to my colleagues.

Challenge Grants - The most important program of the NEH for strengthening key institutions in the humanities -- Libraries, museums, scholarly societies, state humanities councils, university programs -- is the Challenge Grant Program. The Minnesota Humanities Commission provides useful insight into the NEH's program. A 1994 NEH Challenge Grant of \$250,000 with a requirement of \$3 non-federal to \$1 of NEH funds permitted MHC president Cheryl Dickson and colleagues to raise funds from private foundations, corporations, and the Minnesota legislature sufficient to restore a vacant, historic children's hospital as a permanent headquarters for the Minnesota Humanities Commission as well as a well-equipped conference center dedicated to humanities-based professional development activities. The Humanities Education Center provides an intellectual home for Minnesota's K-12 teachers and offers a wide variety of courses aimed at strengthening and refreshing teachers. The challenge grant was the first awarded by NEH to a state humanities council. Although the NEH portion of the building project was rather small (i.e. 9%). Ms. Dickson has said that NEH was the critical component for raising the other funds. In fact, she noted in the final report "Many private sector contributors who made donations to the MHC's capital campaign for the Humanities Education Center, in response to NEH's Challenge Grant, had never heard of MHC, or repeatedly had dismissed its funding requests for program [support]." In fact, Ms. Dickson argues that a humanities organization trying to raise funds for endowment or capital projects would be severely hampered if they did not have the NEH "seal of approval" that a competitive, peer reviewed NEH challenge grant provides.

NEH Fellowships are central to the agencies mandate from Congress to provide "encouragement and support of national progress and scholarship in the humanities..." For the last 10 years, NEH's stipend for a nine-month fellowship remained at \$30,000 -- a sum that was adequate at the beginning but fell increasingly behind so that many scholars could not afford to accept one. In the present year, NEH used part of the \$5 million increase in its appropriation to raise the fellowship rate to \$35,000. The centers for advanced study which regrant NEH fellowships are making parallel increases. The plan for FY-2002 is to increase the grants to \$40,000. The downside of the stipend increase is that the number of fellowships will drop to 160 from the 180 awarded in FY-2000. It is through fellowships that important scholarship is made accessible to the public. By actual count, NEH reports that its fellowships and stipends resulted in publication of more than 2,500 books; won ten Pulitzer Prizes including a 1999 prize for history awarded to Edwin Burrows and Michael Wallace for *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*.

Mr. Chairman, NEH is a wonderful resource for the American people -- We urge you to initiate an increase in the budget to \$150 million for FY-2002