

National Endowment for the Humanities

Enriching America's Educational and Cultural Life

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1965. NEH is the single largest funder of humanities programs in the United States.

ACTION NEEDED:

We urge Congress to support funding of \$177 million for FY 2008 for the National Endowment for the Humanities, an increase of \$36 million above the FY 2007 appropriation and the President's request. This increase represents an important step forward in restoring NEH funding to its historic levels.

We propose a proportional increase for all grant programs to help offset the impact of inflation and recent declines in funding for NEH core programs.

- New funds would extend the reach and impact of the agency's core programs and special initiatives.
- Additional funding will serve as a signal that the Congress is ready to make a significant new investment in the nation's education and research infrastructure through the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- Members of the National Humanities Alliance, and the thousands of teachers, scholars, organizations and institutions they represent, use NEH grants to maintain a strong system of academic research, education and public programs in the humanities.
- As the single largest source of support for the humanities in the United States, NEH plays a critical role in the education of our nation's citizens; the creation and dissemination of new knowledge; and the preservation and enrichment of American intellectual and cultural life.
- The humanities continue to play an important role in preparing our students and the public to flourish as citizens in a global society. The humanities teach the cultural and historical traditions that define what it is to be American and foster a better understanding of history and culture in the world at large.

Funding History

The National Endowment for the Humanities is funded under the **Interior** appropriations bill. NEH is funded at \$141.1 million in FY 2007. The President's budget request for FY 2008 recommends approximately level funding of \$141.355 million for the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is estimated that competitive grant funds within NEH core programs (Education, Preservation & Access, Public Programs, Research and Challenge Grants) would be cut by approximately \$1.1 million within the President's request.

In nominal dollars, not adjusted for inflation, NEH was funded at its peak of \$177.5 million in FY 1994.

[Note: Estimates are based on allocations outlined in the President's FY 2007 and FY 2008 budget proposals.]

National Endowment for the Humanities Annual Appropriations, FY 94 to Present (in millions of dollars)

Fiscal Year	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
Budget Request	177.5	177.5	182.0	136.0	136.0	136.0	150.0	150.0	120.5	126.9	152.0	162.0	138.1	141.0	141.36
Appropriation	177.5	172.0	110.0	110.0	110.7	110.7	115.3	120.0	124.5	124.9	135.3	138.1	140.9	141.1	N/A

Note: Figures above are not adjusted for inflation. Source: National Endowment for the Humanities.

Background

NEH grants are awarded on a competitive, peer-review basis to organizations, institutions and individuals throughout the country. Many grants provide significant leveraging of nonfederal giving through matching requirements. Awards are made to nonprofit cultural institutions, such as **colleges, universities, museums, archives, libraries, public television, and radio stations**; to **state humanities councils**; and to individual **scholars**. NEH extends its reach through annual operating grants to its partner institutions, the 56 state humanities councils, located in every state and U.S. territory.

President Bush launched the NEH *We the People* initiative in 2002 to promote the study and teaching of American history and culture; to preserve the nation's historic documents; and to disseminate knowledge of American history and culture through exhibitions, public programs, and partnerships with the state humanities councils.

This past year, NEH launched the *Digital Humanities Initiative*. This new program will issue grants to projects that explore new ways to learn, share, examine, preserve and interpret the humanities in a digital environment.

Humanities Talking Points

- **What are the humanities?** According to the 1965 National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act:
"The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods."
- **The humanities are essential to democracy and citizenship in a global society.** A government that supports and funds the humanities fosters a better understanding of our history, culture and the world we live in. Knowledge of the humanities enables our citizens to make informed decisions when faced with social, political, economic and technological challenges.
- **An agency that responds quickly to need.** On September 7, 2005, NEH made available at least \$1 million for emergency grants to libraries, museums, colleges, universities, and other cultural and historical institutions in Gulf Coast areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. Over the past year, emergency applications have been processed swiftly, helping to preserve priceless books, records, manuscripts, art, and cultural artifacts damaged by the hurricane and the flooding.
- **Federal support for the humanities has historically received bipartisan support.** FY 2006 NEH appropriations were increased in a floor amendment voice vote in 2005, and in 2004 an increase was approved by a voice vote of 241 to 185. In 2006, 119 Representatives and 43 Senators signed bipartisan Dear Colleague letters signaling their support for an NEH increase.
- **A small investment through NEH goes a long way.** NEH provides seed money for high-quality projects and programs that reach millions of Americans each year. This money, and NEH's reputation, leverages millions of dollars in non-federal support for humanities projects. NEH Challenge and matching grants have stimulated over \$2 billion in non-federal funding.
- **The endowment's competitive peer-review process encourages excellence.** In FY 2006, the NEH reviewed 4,897 grant proposals and funded 1,060, or 22% of these projects. This competition encourages high-quality work that has earned nearly 600 awards, including nine Pulitzer Prizes, eight Bancroft Prizes, and six National Book Awards.
- **NEH is critical to addressing the nation's needs in education.** NEH promotes improved education in our nations colleges and universities through faculty and teacher training, curriculum development, and the production of online and other educational resources.
- **NEH provides critical leadership in preserving our historical and cultural heritage,** from a 20-year effort to film crumbling books ("brittle books") to programs to assist museums stabilize material culture collections. At-risk objects include books, journals, newspapers, manuscripts, archival collections, maps, photographs, films, sound recordings, oral histories, archaeological and ethnographic objects, decorative and fine art, and textiles.
- **NEH provides critical support for humanities scholarship** and facilitates the flow of scholarly research to the public through books, articles, educational television and radio programs, and other media. Examples of works made possible by NEH include Ken Burns' film *The Civil War*, the documentary *MacArthur*, and the award-winning book *Undaunted Courage* by Stephen Ambrose.
- **NEH engages Americans at all levels of learning through public humanities programs,** including exhibits in museums, libraries, and historical organizations; through the programs of the state humanities councils; and a variety of other activities, such as radio, film and television productions.
- **State councils respond to local needs and help to ensure that the best of the humanities reaches Americans in nearly every district of the nation.** State humanities councils address critical needs in the areas of professional development for teachers, family literacy programs, and public humanities programming.