

National Historical Publications and Records Commission

ACTION NEEDED: We urge Congress to support FY 2010 funding of at least \$10 million, the figure requested in the President's budget, for the grants program of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), a small, but vitally important body within the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). We also support and seek Congressional approval of a five-year reauthorization of the NHPRC's grants programs at the \$20 million level.

Funding Overview

The **grants** program of the NHPRC must be funded as a separate line in the NARA budget under the Financial Services/General Government Appropriations Bill. This program also must be reauthorized for FY10 and beyond.

During the current fiscal year, the appropriation for the grants program is \$13 million. The constituency is very grateful to the Congress for this appropriation, which includes \$4.5 million designated for an initiative to digitize both the published volumes and unpublished papers of our nation's Founding Fathers and make these materials available for free online.

Preserving the Documentary Heritage of the United States

- **THE LONGEST-SURVIVING DEMOCRACY ON EARTH HAS A DUTY TO DOCUMENT ITS HISTORY AND MAKE THIS DOCUMENTARY RECORD ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC.** The NHPRC makes grants to institutions across the country to help support: research and editorial work on book and/or online publication of the papers of nationally significant individuals and institutions; preservation of essential historical materials to make them more accessible to the public; development of archival programs; and promotion of national, regional and state coordination in addressing major issues relating to preserving our nation's documentary heritage, such as the common concerns of electronic records and disaster preparedness.
- **THROUGH ITS SMALL, BUT EFFECTIVE, GRANTS PROGRAM THE NHPRC IS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BODY THAT PROVIDES NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR DOCUMENTING OUR HERITAGE.** NHPRC grants have had a tremendous positive impact across our nation on preserving our documentary heritage, laying the foundation for educational tools to bring documents into classrooms at all levels, and making documentary resources readily accessible to a wide variety of audiences. Without this federal leadership perhaps the most important result of NHPRC archival grants—statewide, regional, and national cooperation on archival issues-- would be threatened.
- **NHPRC GRANTS ARE A GOOD INVESTMENT FOR THE COUNTRY.** NHPRC grants leverage federal dollars by requiring grantee institutions to contribute or raise major amounts of non-federal funds. Through its model cost-sharing program, in which the required non-federal contribution is 50% or more, the NHPRC has effectively employed federal leverage to preserve our documentary heritage, while ensuring other potential funders that the projects are of genuine significance, capably staffed, and well organized.
- **LOSS OF THE NHPRC'S FUNDING TO PROJECTS WOULD HAVE A DOMINO EFFECT CAUSING FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES TO BE WITHDRAWN OR REDUCED.** NHPRC grants are the linchpins for the funding structure of most projects--without them the structure will collapse and current projects could lose all funding, and since the vast majority of NHPRC grant money goes for personnel costs, there would be a corresponding loss of jobs in a field that is already hard hit by state and local funding cuts.

NHPRC Annual Appropriations, FY' 97 to present (in millions of dollars):

FISCAL YEAR	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10
APPROPRIATION	5.0	5.5	6.0	6.25	6.4	6.4	6.4	10.0	5.0	5.5	5.5	7.5	9.25	13.0

Note: Figures above are not adjusted for inflation. Source: NHPRC

- **HISTORICAL DOCUMENTARY EDITIONS AND RECORDS ARE USED BY AN EVER-WIDENING AUDIENCE INCLUDING: SCHOLARS, STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AT EVERY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS, MUSEUM CURATORS, GENEALOGISTS, JURISTS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC.** The Internet has opened up a new world for the dissemination of the products of NHPRC-funded projects, but that dissemination and truly democratic access to reliable historical sources will come at substantial cost. Projects assisted by NHPRC grants ensure that these Internet resources are reliable, accessible, and durable for the long term. NHPRC supported editorial projects have cooperated with educators to create online resources for teachers and students and have become information centers on their subjects.
- **HISTORICAL STUDY AND UNDERSTANDING IS NECESSARY TO OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY.** The importance of the preservation and dissemination of documents significant to an understanding of the United States was eloquently stated by J. Franklin Jameson, a founder of the National Archives and the NHPRC:

"The publication of documentary historical materials is a regular function of all civilized governments, and it is not likely to be omitted by any government in which there is any appreciation of how much historical study does and can do for the promotion of national patriotism."

Background

The NHPRC is the only grant-making organization, public or private, with an exclusive mission to provide national leadership in promoting the preservation and use of the materials of our documentary heritage essential to understanding our American democracy, history, and culture. It accomplishes this mission by making grants to promote the preservation and accessibility of historical records and to publish, in print and/or electronically, the papers of significant figures and themes in American history.

The NHPRC has been characterized as "history's venture capitalist"—through federal outright and matching grants, it successfully leverages private sector contributions to projects publishing the papers associated with nationally significant individuals and institutions. The NHPRC is currently helping to fund dozens of papers projects, including those of founders Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Adams, and Madison; projects documenting the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and the First Federal Congress; the correspondence between Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony; and the Papers of Eleanor Roosevelt, George C. Marshall, Thomas A. Edison, Ulysses S. Grant, Thomas Edison, and Frederick Douglass. It has funded hundreds of projects designed to preserve records of enduring historical value and cooperative state, regional, and national projects that address common archival issues, such as the complex problem of preserving electronic historical records.

Congress has demonstrated its support for this program and chosen to expand the NHPRC's authorized mission in recent years. It has consistently funded the NHPRC's grants program at a higher level than Administration requests. When the Bush Administration attempted to zero out NHPRC funding, Congress chose to fund the grants program and administrative support for it, instead of abruptly terminating the livelihood and programmatic integrity of this vital history and archival support agency. We ask the Congress to fully fund the Administration's request for the NHPRC for FY2011. In addition, in 2008 the Congress passed PL110-404, which added several new program goals to the mission of the NHPRC's grants program. The report of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on this legislation made it clear that projects under these new program goals should not be funded unless the authorized funding level for the NHPRC grants program was raised and additional funds were appropriated. The grants program, which has not seen an increase in its authorized funding level in over a decade, must be reauthorized at an increased level—\$20 million a year for 5 years is both needed and appropriate in order to maintain current programs; continue to support for the electronic publication of the Founding Fathers Papers (and hopefully the papers of other American leaders as well) and to make those publications freely available; document the lives of significant minority and key 20th century figures; continue and expand the cooperative state and regional activities in planning and implementing archival program (already heavily impacted by funding cutbacks in the states) ; and continue to address the pressing and continually evolving issue of electronic records. Otherwise the preservation of important historical documentation—the raw materials for future historians—will be jeopardized.