

Support the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

Action Needed

The National Humanities Alliance urges Congress to provide \$204 million in program funds for the National Endowment for the Humanities in FY 2011, a \$64 million increase over FY 2010. This includes \$144 million for national programs (a \$44.4 million increase), and \$60 million for the federal/state partnership (a \$19.6 million increase).

We strongly oppose \$7.2 million in cuts proposed by the Administration for NEH programs in the FY 2011 Budget.

Additional funds are needed to:

- Help offset severe economic pressures on the academic workforce and humanities institutions. NEH plays a critical role in supporting our nation's infrastructure for humanities education and research. As the impact of the economic downturn deepens, many institutions and nonprofit associations around the country are struggling to maintain continued access to high-quality programming and educational opportunities in the humanities – from colleges and universities, to schools, museums, libraries, historical societies, and other nonprofit organizations.
- Maintain U.S. capacity to address complex challenges and support a broadly-educated, competitive workforce. Our nation's long tradition of fostering broad access to liberal arts education is increasingly looked to by nations around the world as a unique driver of U.S. economic leadership and innovation in the last century. Nevertheless, recent federal policy places almost exclusive emphasis on fostering scientific and technological advancement, and widens still further the historic gap between federal and institutional support for the humanities and investment in other academic disciplines. The current policy direction is putting at risk our nation's continued capacity to support a pipeline of talent in all fields. Our long-term economic success depends on cultivating a broadly educated workforce ready to compete in the knowledge-based, global economy of the 21st century. *The humanities represent core fields of knowledge and capacities that enrich individuals, undergird our civic institutions, and aid society in addressing complex challenges.* It is a strategic mistake to turn away from a historic strength of the U.S. educational system at the very moment other nations around the world are moving to embrace it.

NEH National Programs

The National Humanities Alliance recommends an increase of \$44.4 million for national programs for FY 2011, including:

- \$36.9 million to increase the award rate for critically underfunded grant competitions
- \$7.5 million for a new, competitively-awarded graduate student-faculty program

NEH national programs represent the pool of funds that support peer-reviewed, competitive grant opportunities for a wide range of educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and individual scholars around the country. They encompass NEH core programs, divisions, and special initiatives: **Research, Education, Preservation & Access, Challenge Grants, Public Programs, the Office of Digital Humanities, *We the People*, and *Bridging Cultures*.** NEH has the *immediate capacity to distribute increased funds nationwide* through existing program structures, as evidenced by current application and award rates, as well as demonstrated success at significantly higher historical funding levels. Current funding for NEH national programs is \$99.6 million, just over half of its FY 1994 value, equivalent in today's dollars to about \$185.7 million when adjusted for inflation.

The Administration's FY 2011 budget for NEH represents a \$5.3 million (5.7%) cut for national programs (proposed at \$94.3 million for FY 2011) – essentially a rollback to the FY 2009 level (\$94.0 million).

Unmet Demand

Demand for humanities project support, as demonstrated by NEH application rates (and confirmed by feedback from the field), far exceeds funding available. In FY 2009, NEH received 4,366 competitive grant applications representing more than \$402 million in requested funds, but was only able to fund 16.9% of these peer-reviewed project proposals. This is a low figure, when compared to the most recent rate of 32% reported by the National Science Foundation (NSF), a federal agency parallel to NEH in its operations and mission to advance research and teaching for the academic fields under its umbrella.

- We estimate that at least \$37 million would be needed to increase the NEH award rate to 25%, if only the most critically underfunded of NEH's grant competitions were boosted. To achieve parity with the FY 2009 NSF funding rate of 32%, an increase of at least \$60 million would be required.

Examples of underfunded NEH grant programs include:

- fellowships and collaborative research
- digital humanities projects
- professional development for teachers and faculty
- preservation of historically-significant collections
- public film, radio, television, and digital media projects
- challenge grants to build institutional capacity



Addressing Critical Priorities

NHA continues to urge expansion of NEH activity in a number of critical areas, including: international studies, humanities data, and graduate education. We are pleased to note interest signaled in the Obama Administration's FY 2011 budget request for the following:

- **GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING**—For FY 2011, NEH has proposed a new special initiative—*Bridging Cultures*—to advance Americans' understanding of their own rich cultural heritage, as well as the cultural complexity of the world in which they live. As the only federal agency responsible for advancement of a broad range of critical fields in this area (e.g., history, foreign language, comparative literature, religious studies, cultural anthropology), NEH is well-positioned to provide leadership in support of increased U.S. global competency and competitiveness abroad, as well as civil engagement and understanding at home.
- **HUMANITIES DATA**—NHA applauds the following statement in the Administration's budget request for NEH: "In FY 2011, the Endowment plans to enter into a partnership with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS)...to sustain and extend AAAS's developmental work on the Humanities Indicators project. This project, which is responsive to NEH's legislative mandate to develop a "system of national information and data collection...on the humanities," is making a wide range of humanities data available to researchers, educators, and the general public. These data will equip policymakers and institutional administrators with statistical tools to help inform decision-making about primary and secondary education, higher education, the humanities workforce, levels and sources of humanities funding, public understanding of the humanities, and other areas of concern to the humanities community."
- **GRADUATE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**—NEH has recently revised the eligibility criteria for summer seminars and institutes to create opportunities for humanities graduate students, beginning in the summer of 2010. NHA strongly supports this policy change, which is responsive to suggestions from the humanities community. For

more than a decade, NEH stood as one of the few federal agencies that did not support graduate education.

As noted, our proposal urges \$7.5 million in additional funding to create a new, competitive program promoting collaboration among graduate students and faculty in the humanities, similar to models in the sciences. This program would provide much-needed support to sustain the pipeline for the next generation of scholars and educators in the humanities. These young people are particularly vulnerable today because of the especially severe impact of the economic downturn on new faculty hires in humanities disciplines. Increased federal investment in humanities graduate education is needed to attract and retain talented individuals to serve as the nation's future experts and educators supporting a competitive workforce.

Funding Overview

NEH is funded at \$167.5 million for FY 2010, including \$140.0 million in total program funds and \$27.5 million for administration. FY 2010 program funds include: \$99.6 million for national programs and \$40.4 million for the federal/state partnership. ***NEH did not receive funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009.***

President's FY 2011 Budget Request—The Obama administration has requested \$161.3 million in overall funding for the NEH, including \$132.8 million for programs and \$28.5 million for administration. ***The FY 2011 proposed budget represents a \$7.2 million (5.6%) cut to NEH program funds for FY 2011.*** We strongly oppose these cuts, which would roll back critical increases by Congress, and ignore essential needs for the nation and local communities across the United States.

Appropriations History—Historically, NEH has demonstrated the capacity to operate at much higher funding levels. Even with recent adjustments, NEH overall funding is still just over a third of its funding peak in 1979 (\$429 million when adjusted for inflation), and has not yet recovered from a nearly 40% cut imposed in the mid-90s. In FY 1994 (NEH's nominal funding peak), NEH was funded at the equivalent of \$256.9 million.

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

FISCAL YEAR	94	95	96	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11
Budget Request	177.5	177.5	182.0	150.0	150.0	120.5	126.9	152.0	162.0	138.1	141.0	141.4	144.4	171.3	161.3
Appropriation (Nominal)	177.5	172.0	110.0	115.3	120.0	124.5	124.9	135.3	138.1	140.9	141.1	144.7	155.0	167.5	n/a

*The FY 2010 Budget Request included \$10 million to transfer administration of the National Capitol Arts and Cultural Affair Program to NEH (not approved by Congress)

Background

The National Endowment for the Humanities is an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1965. Awards go to nonprofit educational institutions, such as colleges, universities, museums, archives, libraries, public television, and radio stations; and to individual scholars. NEH extends its reach through annual operating grants to state humanities councils located in every state and U.S. territory. NEH is funded through the Interior Appropriations bill.

"An advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone, but must give full value and support to the other great branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future."

— NATIONAL FOUNDATION ON THE ARTS AND THE HUMANITIES ACT OF 1965