

**PREPARED TESTIMONY SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD TO THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**BY JOHN CHURCHILL - PRESIDENT, NATIONAL HUMANITIES ALLIANCE AND
SECRETARY, THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY**

**REGARDING FISCAL YEAR 2008 FUNDING FOR THE
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES**

APRIL 19, 2007

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the National Humanities Alliance and its 91 member organizations, I am pleased to testify for the record in support of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The National Humanities Alliance respectfully urges the Subcommittee 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 level and the President's request. This increase would represent an important step forward in restoring NEH funding to its historic levels of demonstrated effectiveness.

While we are pleased that the President continues to voice support for the humanities, we are disappointed that the administration has again recommended flat funding for the agency, at a level of \$141.355 million for FY 2008. The President's budget proposal not only fails to address inflationary costs, it would cut funding for NEH core programs by an estimated \$1.1 million to meet administrative and overhead increases¹.

The National Humanities Alliance supports an increase for all NEH program funds to help reverse the effects of budgetary cuts and inflation and ensure the long-term effectiveness of the agency. We are particularly concerned about recent declines in the capacity of the NEH core programs, which have suffered disproportionately from these downward forces. These programs are Research, Education, Challenge Grants, Preservation & Access, Public Programs, and the Federal/State Partnership. We propose that restored funding be routed through these core programs, and that it be directed, in so far as possible, in support of a new emphasis on the global context of the American experience. This new emphasis would reflect the country's need to comprehend the broader world we engage in such complex ways. The effort would complement both the agency's *We the People* initiative to promote study and understanding of American history, culture, and civic institutions, as well as the agency's recently launched Digital Humanities Initiative, which supports projects that develop innovative information technologies in humanities education and scholarship.

We support the administration's request of \$15.2 million for continued funding of the NEH *We the People* initiative, and \$1.4 million to extend the Digital Humanities Initiative in FY 2008.

¹ This estimate is based on allocations outlined in the President's FY 2007 and FY 2008 budget proposals.

Renewing the Federal Investment in the Humanities

Our members, 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. Even at an ebb, NEH is, today, the single largest source of support for the humanities in the United States². As such, NEH plays an important leadership 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 significance of NEH funding is multiplied by the ability of NEH grants, and the high regard in which they are held, to stimulate additional project support. Since its founding, NEH has leveraged more than \$2 billion in direct, non-federal giving for humanities projects across the United States. Though a relatively small agency, the NEH is nevertheless critical to the humanities infrastructure of the United States.

The combined impacts of inflation and budget cuts on the agency raise serious concerns about NEH's long-term ability to carry out the mandate for which it was established. The funding table below illustrates the decline, both in nominal and constant dollars, in the agency's operational capacity. NEH reached its *nominal* funding peak of \$177.5 million in FY 1994, which when adjusted for inflation, would be equivalent to \$241 million today. Reinstating the 1994 budget level would constitute a significant reversal of this trend, and put the agency on a path toward full restoration of its grantmaking capacity.

Table: NEH Appropriations, FY 1977-2007 (in millions of dollars)

| Fiscal Year | 1977 | 1979 | 1980 | 1990 | 1994 | 1995 | 2000 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Nominal \$ | 99.4 | 145.2 | 150.1 | 156.9 | 177.5 | 172.0 | 115.3 | 135.3 | 138.1 | 140.9 | 141.0 |
| Constant \$ (2006 \$) | 330.6 | 403.3 | 367.2 | 242.0 | 241.4 | 227.5 | 134.9 | 144.4 | 142.5 | 140.9 | 141.0 |

Note: Constant dollar values are adjusted for inflation according to the annual CPI-U.

The Global Context of the American Experience

NEH's *We the People* initiative has been a noted success. We propose complementing that success in the study of the American experience with an extended effort aimed at support for understanding of cultures around the world. The increase we advocate—\$36 million—would help support programming designed to enhance Americans' understanding of the world and our place within it. Like *We the People*, this emphasis on global cultural perspectives could be routed, administratively, through the core programs named above. This would restore those core programs to a level at which need has been demonstrated, while focusing the new funding primarily on issues of contemporary urgency.

The well-being of this country depends now, as perhaps never before, on our ability to understand the ways of life and thought of peoples in disparate cultural traditions within and

² According to data compiled by the Foundation Center and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the NEH provides almost six times the support for humanities programs as the largest private funder, and more than the top fifteen combined. *Foundation Funding for the Humanities: An Overview of Current and Historical Trends, June 2004.*

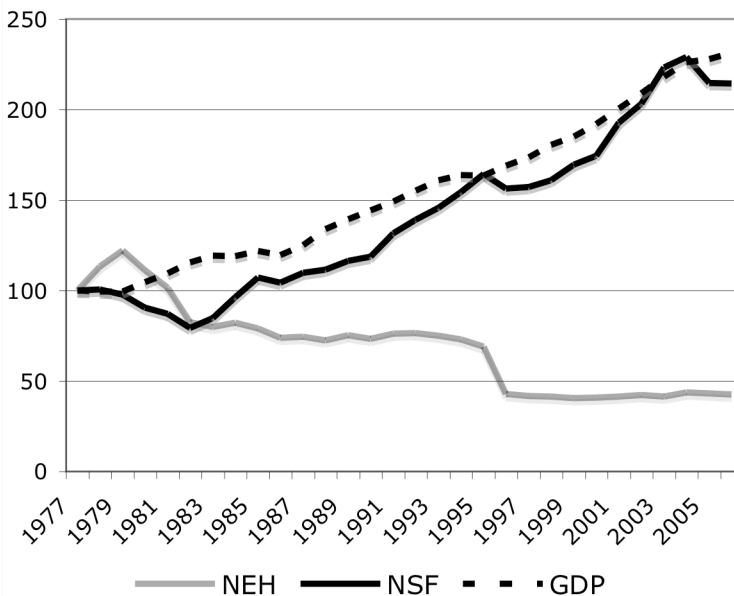
without our borders. One cannot understand the American experience without knowledge of the historical and cultural experiences that have informed the lives of new Americans arriving to this country from around the world. Moreover, we cannot succeed in aiding those we wish to assist or in defending ourselves against those who wish us ill, unless we bring insights cultivated uniquely and effectively in the humanities.

Funding Analysis

In the legislation establishing NEH more than forty years ago, Congress found that "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." Yet today, this vision remains unfulfilled. Federal funding for the humanities through NEH has failed to keep pace with either our nation's economy, or its investment in science and engineering.

In Fiscal Year 1979, the year in which NEH funding reached its *real* historical peak, Congress funded NEH at a level of more than \$400 million (2006 constant dollars) —a level equivalent to about 16 percent of the budget for the National Science Foundation. In 2007, NEH funds represent only 2.5% of the NSF budget. Over the last thirty years, federal funding for NSF has grown by over 200% and has kept pace with the nation's economic output. In contrast, NEH funding has declined by nearly 60% over the same time period, and, today, NEH is operating at less than half of its demonstrated funding capacity of thirty years ago.³

Growth of NEH, NSF and GDP (FY 1977-2006)



While we applaud the advances made in research and development in science and engineering, we cannot forget the importance of the humanities to our country's workforce and civic institutions. Our nation faces many challenges in the 21st century. The information and skills imparted by study of the humanities—critical thinking and analysis, knowledge of world history, literature and cultures, and multiple language proficiency—are vital to our citizens' success in an increasingly complex and competitive global environment.

³ Data sources include: NEH Office of Strategic Planning (NEH Annual Appropriations), NSF Office of Budget, Finance & Award Management (NSF FY Actuals), U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of Economic Analysis (Real Gross Domestic Product).

The humanities are the vehicle through which our students and the public learn about and reflect on our nation's history and civic institutions. They are equally an important conduit for promoting knowledge of our culture and institutions abroad. A greater investment in the humanities is necessary to ensure the knowledgeable citizenry upon which the preservation of our country's democratic ideals and long-term economic strength depends. It is time to renew our nation's commitment to the education and enrichment of its citizens in all areas of learning.

Funding Shortfall in NEH Core Programs

The NEH core programs are at the center of the agency's mission to create, preserve, and disseminate knowledge in the humanities. Yet, since 1994, these programs have suffered disproportionately from budget cuts and inflation. In Fiscal Year 1994, NEH awards in the core program divisions of Research/Fellowships, Education, Preservation & Access, Public Programs and Challenge Grants totaled \$126.8 million (not adjusted for inflation)⁴. In FY 2006, awards in these divisions totaled only \$80.8 million—a 36% decline⁵.

While we recognize that Congress continues to face difficult choices this year, we are asking the Subcommittee to recommend a funding increase for the agency of \$36 million, signaling that the 110th Congress is ready to make a significant new investment in the nation's education and research infrastructure through the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Founded in 1981, the National Humanities Alliance is a coalition of more than 90 national, state, and local nonprofit organizations and institutions dedicated to the advancement of humanities education, research and public programs. Membership includes associations of: scholars and scholarly societies, libraries, museums, state humanities councils, historical societies, higher education associations, university-based and independent humanities research centers.

Founded in 1776, Phi Beta Kappa is the nation's oldest academic honor society. It has chapters at 276 institutions and half a million members throughout the country. Its mission is to champion education in the liberal arts and sciences, to recognize academic excellence, and to foster freedom of thought and expression. Among its programs are academic and literary awards, lectureships, a fellowship, a professorship, and publication of *The American Scholar*, an award-winning quarterly journal.

⁴ NEH FY 1994 Annual Report.

⁵ NEH Summary of Grants and Awards, FY 2006. Division totals include *We the People* funds.