

National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC)

Preserving the Documentary Heritage of the United States

We urge Congress to support FY 2008 funding of \$12 million: \$10 million for national grants, plus \$2 million necessary for essential staffing and program administration-related costs.

For the 3rd year in a row, the Administration has zeroed out the NHPRC, the grant-making arm of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), requesting only minimal funding to staff and administer current NHPRC grants, after which the program would be terminated.

FUNDING HISTORY

The grants program of the **NHPRC** is funded as a separate line in the **National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) budget under the Financial Services/General Government Appropriations Bill.**

Table: NHPRC Annual Appropriations, FY93 to Present (in millions of dollars)

| FY | 94 | 95 | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 00 | 01 | 02 | 03 | 04 | 05 | 06 | 07 |
|--------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| \$\$\$ | 5.25 | 9.0 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 6.0 | 6.25 | 6.4 | 6.4 | 6.4 | 10.0 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 5.5 |

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

TALKING POINTS

- The longest-surviving democracy on earth has a duty to document and preserve its history.** The NHPRC makes grants to institutions across the country for: editorial work on book 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 regional and national coordination in addressing major issues relating to preserving our nation's documentary heritage. While NARA concentrates on federal records, through its tiny, but effective, grants program the NHPRC is the federal government body, which provides national leadership. NHPRC grants have had a tremendous positive impact on preserving our documentary heritage, laying the foundation for tools to bring documents into classrooms at all levels and making documentary resources readily accessible to popular authors such as David McCullough and Steven Ambrose, exhibit curators, documentary film makers, jurists, students of history, and many others.
- NHPRC grants are a good investment for the country.** NHPRC grants leverage federal dollars by requiring grantees to contribute or raise major amounts of non-federal funds. Federal funds ensure potential backers that the projects are of genuine significance, capably staffed, and well organized. Through its model cost-sharing program, in which the average non-Federal contribution is almost 50%, NHPRC has effectively employed federal leverage to preserve our documentary heritage. **Loss of the NHPRC's funding to projects will 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.
- 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. NHPRC grants have ensured that these Internet resources are both reliable and durable for the long term.

- **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, whose exclusive mission is 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, and Frederick Douglass. It has funded hundreds of projects designed to preserve historical records of enduring value and cooperative state, regional, and national projects that address common archival issues, such as the complex problem of electronic historical records.

In FY 2004 the NHPRC received its fully authorized level of \$10 million, but for FY 2005 Congress appropriated only \$5 million--after the Administration proposed cutting the program to \$2 million. In FY 2006 and 2007 the President proposed termination of the program, but Congress appropriated \$5.5 million for grants and \$2 million for staffing and administration. The NHPRC's FY1979 funding level for grants was 4.0 million, yet, nearly 30 years later, the increase in grants funding averages out to 1 ¼ annually. Funding at the current level threatens the programmatic integrity of the program

The President's proposed FY2008 budget of zero funds for the NHPRC would abruptly terminate the livelihood and programmatic integrity of this vital history and archival support agency. If the recommendation is adopted, documentary publications projects, already universally understaffed and under-funded, will lose experienced staff and their progress will be slowed; some will simply close down. The very existence of state and regional activities in planning and implementing archival programs, already impacted by funding cutbacks in the states, is also imperiled. Without adequate funding, research on the pressing problem of electronic records will be curtailed, jeopardizing the preservation of important historical documentation--the raw materials for future historians.