

**For Immediate Release
November 29, 2005**

CoSA Launches “Closest to Home” Project: Archival Programs for Local Government Records

IOWA CITY, IOWA — November 29, 2005 — The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) has received a two-year grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) which includes \$170,869 to support a project designed to lay the groundwork for stronger local government archives in each state. The project will analyze current conditions and determine what services, standards, and funding strategies will work best to ensure the long-term preservation of and access to local government records.

Local government records represent the foundation of the U.S. archival system and are truly “Closest to Home,” created and used in the communities in which we, as citizens, live and work. They are arguably the records that most affect our daily lives and those of our neighbors, documenting our marriages; the education of our children; the homes, land, and businesses we own; the social services we receive; and civil and criminal legal proceedings in our communities.

An eight-member Task Force will oversee the project. Kaye Lanning Minchew, Director of the Troup County (GA) Archives, and Roy H. Tryon, State Archivist and Records Administrator of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, will co-chair the Task Force. Three Expert Panels will support the work of the Task Force, each representing a sector with a strong interest in improving archival programs for local government records: local government officials, users of local government records, and archivists who work directly with local government records.

The Task Force will also engage three consultants to prepare reports on the key issues affecting local government records of long-term value. While the Task Force will not finalize specific charges to the consultants until its first meeting in February 2006, the topics are likely to encompass electronic records and other technologies, including imaging systems; funding mechanisms at the national, state, and local levels; education and training for local government officials and the archivists who care for their records; the impact of federal and state mandates on records of long-term value at the local level; and ensuring that users of all kinds have ready access to local government archives.

In addition to the three consultant reports, products of the Local Government Archives Project will include:

- *A case statement on the value of local government archives* to use in educating key stakeholders about the value of local government archives, including why they are important and why they constitute a national priority;
- *A feasibility report on developing measures and common data elements* for use in benchmarking local government archival programs; and
- *An action plan and recommendations* for state and local governments, professional associations serving archivists and local government officials, and individuals who work in these programs.

Staff support for the project's Task Force, Expert Panels, and consultants will be provided by Vicki Walch, CoSA Program Director, and Jenifer Burlis-Freilich, CoSA Assistant Program Director.

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) is a national organization comprising the directors of the principal archival agencies in each state and territorial government. Working collectively through their membership in CoSA, the State Archivists encourage cooperation and promulgation of best practices among the states; define and communicate archival and records concerns at a national level; and work with other national organizations to ensure that the nation's documentary heritage is preserved and accessible.

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