

Council of State Archivists (CoSA)

Questions Submitted to the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

Confirmation of the Archivist of the United States

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) is a professional nonprofit organization of the official government repositories of the fifty states, five territories, and the District of Columbia. CoSA members are the state-level counterparts of the National Archives. They perform many parallel functions related to the preservation of and access to government records documenting the rights of citizens, assuring government accountability, and connecting all Americans with our individual and shared histories.

The following questions are offered to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee for use by staff or committee members. Each contains three parts: a) factual context; b) CoSA's expectations of the Archivist of the United States; and c) *the question itself*.

1. NARA has made important advances in the preservation and management of electronic records, and CoSA has facilitated significant advancement at the state level. But those efforts have lacked the level of federal-state partnership needed to meet our potential for keeping pace with technological changes, assuring the persistence of reliable historical records, and providing proper administration of confidentiality and access.

CoSA seeks from the next Archivist of the United States a commitment to sustained channels of communication and partnership on addressing shared challenges in the areas of federal-state recordkeeping overlap and electronic records.

How will you facilitate strengthened relationships with the official archives of the states and territories and demonstrate a commitment to collaboration on shared responsibilities including overlap in records holdings, the preservation of electronic records, and the administration of FOIA?

2. Since 1974 NARA has administered, through the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), a program intended to provide "opportunities for the American people to discover and use records to broaden public understanding of our democracy, history, and culture." These aims are pursued through grants and initiatives supporting the publishing of historical records, access to archival collections, collaborations, public engagement, and professional development, but funding for NHPRC programs lies well below the 1987 level in nominal dollars.

CoSA seeks from the next Archivist of the United States a commitment to strengthening the NHPRC through increased Congressional funding, the implementation of grant programs that are responsive to the needs of states and communities, and strategic

alignment of its initiatives with those of relevant federal agencies such as the NEH and IMLS.

What degree of importance will you place on strengthening the NHPRC, and how will you go about reinvigorating the Historical Records Advisory Boards as state-level affiliates and strategic partners of the NHPRC?

3. In 2026, the United States will mark the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the nation. The deterioration of historical and civic literacy has contributed to the polarization of society and has obscured a keystone American value—the belief that, no matter how we may differ on matters of policy or politics, we accept and will fulfill a mutual commitment to creating a more perfect union. The records of the nation, states, and citizens provide a basis for building unity in cooperation and growth and must be central to the Semiquincentennial.

CoSA seeks from the next Archivist of the United States a commitment to participate robustly in the nation’s commemoration, to promote engagement with records from all types of repositories by the general public and the K-12 community, and to partner with state and territorial archives in pursuing these objectives.

What is NARA’s proper role in the commemoration of the nation’s founding, and how will you use the agency’s holdings and programmatic resources to promote increased historical understanding and improved civic health in conjunction with federal, state, and territorial partners?

4. Government archivists are responsible for ensuring the appropriate, objective, and accessible documentation of public institutions. The repositories where they work have a central, essential role in documenting government, promoting history, and securing rights.

CoSA seeks from the next Archivist of the United States a commitment to continue to uphold the role and responsibility of government archivists as fair and objective handlers of the nation’s documentary heritage and to lead the government archival community in defining and exemplifying ethical and professional archival standards.

How will you ensure that archivists at the National Archives remain objective and fair handlers of the national documentary heritage?

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