

National Archival Associations:

**The Council of State Archivists
The National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators
The Regional Archival Associations Consortium
The Society of American Archivists**

**Statement in Support of H.R. 2978
Reauthorizing the National Historical Publications and Records Commission**

June 11, 2019

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA), the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA), the Regional Archival Associations Consortium (RAAC) and Society of American Archivists (SAA) urge Congress to pass HR 2978 to Amend Title 44, United States Code to reauthorize the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). This legislation will reauthorize the Commission and provide a seat for the Council of State Archivists, the national organization of state archivists. This legislation is vital to the archival community, as the programs administered by NHPRC will bolster innovation, research and development in the archives field.

From 1991 thru 2009, Congress authorized the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) at \$10 million. Although authorization lapsed after 2009, Congress continued to support and fund the program annually. A higher authorization level is necessary because much has changed in the documentary publication and archival/records fields in the past few decades. Accounting for inflation alone, \$10 million in 1991 is equivalent to \$18.7 million today. Below is information about the growing needs and changes that necessitate an increased NHPRC Authorization.

Electronic Records

The preservation and access of electronic records is a significant expense and complicated endeavor for archival institutions. Expanded NHPRC authorization and funding will tackle these complexities and support development of tools and methods to make electronic records preservation more efficient, automated, and accessible when appropriate. Joint projects among the states and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) with multiple research and development efforts will foster speedier results, eliminate duplicate efforts in research, and limit the losses of materials occurring today.

Data from the Council of State Archivists' [2017 State Archives and Records Management Survey](#) reports that the electronic records holdings of state archives are dramatically expanding. From 2012 to 2016, electronic records holdings more than tripled, increasing from 425.8 Terabytes to 1,371.1 Terabytes. The volume continues to increase across the nation.

Due to lack of funding, NHPRC eliminated its State Electronic Records Program in 2017. Grants supported under this program focused on developing State Archives digital preservation capability, which could also be repurposed by other archives, including NARA. Currently, this important area for future development is incorporated into other archival grant funding. Dedicated funding in this area is needed.

Digitization and Access

The public expects content to be available on-line. Many institutions have vast paper and electronic holdings that require tremendous preparation work and indexing as part of the scanning process. NHPRC cannot adequately provide the resources demanded to help support this matching grant program. In 2017, NHPRC received more than 100 grant applications for Archival Records Grants and was able to award only 20. In 2018, about 95 grant applications were submitted and fewer than 20 were awarded. NHPRC data from 2018 indicate that professional development grant requests totaled about \$1.85 million but only \$316,865 was awarded. Archival Records grants requests amounted to \$1.4 million, yet just \$225,000 was awarded. NHPRC staff note that the quality of grant proposals being denied is largely equal to the grants being funded.

250th Anniversary of the United States

Archival institutions hold significant founding-era documents that tell the story of America and the states. With an increased authorization, and appropriation for NHPRC, the archives community at the state and local levels could provide improved access to collections, long hidden from the public due to lack of funding, to help commemorate the nation's 250th Anniversary. An effort to make accessible records related to the nation's founding, territorial records, Native-American records, slavery records, and founding state documents would enrich America's 250th anniversary commemorations through enhanced public engagement both now and for generations to come.

Publications

The oldest portion of grant funding for NHPRC is for publications projects. These grants have funded such projects as "The Papers of George Washington," "The Papers of Thomas Jefferson," and "The Papers of Alexander Hamilton." Half of NHPRC's funding has traditionally been provided to publications projects. These projects are now being created online and older projects are being converted to digital form meeting the growing needs and expectations of users. Many of those are available in Founders Online at www.founders.archives.gov.

Grant Recipient Distributions

The majority of NHPRC grants are awarded to colleges and universities. State and governmental archives rank second in NHPRC support, followed by museums, historical societies and eligible non-profits, and then Native-American tribes and recognized Native groups. NHPRC grants reach communities across the country, many of them underserved and unable to otherwise preserve their histories. Information about grants awarded, sorted by state or territory, is available online at www.archives.gov/nhprc/projects/states-territories.

There is tremendous need and demand for NHPRC funding. The archives profession is facing significant challenges in preserving and providing access to our nation's records – and those challenges are growing daily. We encourage Congress to re-establish NHPRC authorization at \$15 million to help address these issues.

About CoSA, NAGARA, RAAC, and SAA

The **Council of State Archivists (CoSA)** is a nonprofit membership organization of the state and territorial government archives in the fifty states, five territories, and District of Columbia. Through collaborative research, education, and advocacy, CoSA provides leadership that strengthens and supports state and territorial archives in their work to preserve and provide access to government records. CoSA facilitates networking, information sharing, and project collaboration among its member organizations to help state and territorial government archives with their responsibilities for protecting the rights and historical documents of the American people. Read more at www.statearchivists.org.

The **National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA)** is dedicated to the improvement of federal, state, and local government records and information management and the professional development of government records administrators and archivists. Members include county, municipal, and special district governments; state agencies (state records centers, archives, and libraries); federal agencies and employees; public universities; and provincial and institutional programs. Read more at www.nagara.org.

The **Regional Archival Associations Consortium (RAAC)** provides a venue for information exchange among the leaders of regional archival organizations and between the regional organizations and the Society of American Archivists. RAAC fosters collaboration to streamline actions, reduce costs, and increase services to archivists around the nation in such areas as advocacy, public awareness, education, disaster planning/recovery, and grant development. Read more at www.archivists.org/groups/regional-archival-associations-consortium-raac.

The **Society of American Archivists (SAA)** is the oldest and largest national professional association of archivists in North America, representing more than 6,200 archivists employed by businesses, universities, governments, libraries, and historical organizations. Archivists are the professionals who collect, preserve, and make available for research historically significant documents, vital records, and other materials. Read more at www.archivists.org.