

Appropriations: Support the National Archives and Records Administration

Sending Office: Honorable John B. Larson

Sent By: Mike.Dunn@mail.house.gov

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in requesting that the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services & General Government provide **\$433 million for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)** in the upcoming fiscal year (FY) 2022 appropriations bill.

The National Archives are one of the backbones of our national civic infrastructure. Their work plays a key role in ensuring that the government is transparently maintained, for oversight and historical knowledge. Additionally, NARA allows Americans to access their personal and family records, including playing a role for many veterans to access their service records to claim benefits, documentation to qualify for recognition as an Indian tribe, and to aid in immigration disputes.

Despite these vital functions, the National Archives real dollar funding was lower last year than in FY2010. This decrease in funding comes even as Congressional action and Executive mandates have given the Archives increased responsibilities, including digitizing records during a time of exponential increase in total government records and the opening of three Presidential libraries.

More information about the importance of the National Archives and Records Administration, and a call to save it, can be found in [this editorial](#) by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, T.J. Stiles.

For any questions, or to sign on, please contact Michael Dunn with Rep. Larson (Michael.Dunn@mail.house.gov), Dylan Sodaro with Rep. Pascrell (Dylan.Sodaro@mail.house.gov), or Kem Crosley with Rep. Young (Kem.Crosley@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,

Don Young

John B. Larson

Bill Pascrell, Jr.

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Member of Congress

Dear Chairman Quigley and Ranking Member Womack:

As Members of Congress with a strong interest in historic preservation and open access to public records, we write in support of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). We respectfully request you appropriate \$433 million for the agency's operating expenses in the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill.

NARA's core function is to preserve and make accessible federal government and historical records. The National Archives now has over 40 facilities nationwide including its main facilities in Washington, D.C. and College Park, Maryland, and 14 Presidential Libraries. NARA is also responsible for the Federal Register and the NHPRC, which provides grants for the creation of documentary collections (books and electronic) of the papers of nationally significant individuals and institutions.

NARA's operating expenses budget in constant dollars has remained stagnant for over a decade, even as its responsibilities have increased. NARA's FY 20 operating expenses budget was \$359 million, which is \$14 million less than the FY 19 level of \$373 million. When adjusted for inflation, NARA's budget has decreased by 10% since 2012. While NARA did receive a slight increase of \$18 million in FY21, those funds were for one-time costs related to the Presidential transition, resulting in functionally flat funding.

As government agencies transition to electronic records, the volume of NARA's holdings has increased more than threefold, as has the time required to process these new documents. Congress has also placed additional responsibilities on the agency, including requiring NARA to reduce the backlogs of records awaiting declassification. Additionally, NARA has also been given responsibility for three new presidential libraries in the last decades, increasing staff, maintenance, and records management costs.

Despite these added responsibilities, NARA today has fewer employees than it did in 1985. This combination of increased responsibilities and underfunding has forced NARA to cut back on public services and research hours at its facilities. These hours are not adequate to serve the public need for accessibility and government accountability and limit the ability for American's to access their own government's public records. Research at NARA facilities is used to prove citizenship, conduct genealogical research, or gain access to earned veterans their benefits. Additionally, Freedom of Information Act requests and declassifications are backlogged due to a lack of resources.

We understand the many difficult choices the Subcommittee faces in constructing its FY 2022 budget bill. Thank you for your consideration of this request for NARA.

Sincerely,

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