



June 13, 2011

The Honorable José Serrano, Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Financial Services and General Government
2227 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Serrano:

On behalf of the Society of American Archivists and its more than 6,000 members nationwide, I write to urge you and your colleagues on the Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government to provide \$10 million in funding for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

NHPRC's authorization has been at \$10 million since 1964; the 2011 equivalent would be \$70 million. The agency already is operating under serious fiscal constraints. Further cuts would decimate this agency, which has provided critically needed support for records projects throughout the country.

When Congress created the agency, it recognized that the history of the United States is made not only in federal offices in Washington, D.C. Significant evidence of nationally important issues and trends exists in the regions, states, and individual lives of Americans. NHPRC funding provides a means of linking national with local efforts to ensure preservation of our entire record. Consider, for example, that an NHPRC grant funded preservation and digitization of records related to construction of the Erie Canal, and thus provided essential evidence of both the beginning of the westward migration and the first major public works project in the U.S.

Historical records projects are "jobs heavy." Our analysis of existing NHPRC grant projects shows that at least 75% of all grant funds are used to pay staff. For example:

- In 1985-1986 the City of Seattle (Washington) received two NHPRC grants totaling \$58,065 to collect, preserve, and make available the city's archival records. The grants funded one position, but more importantly served as seed money for creation of a permanent archives program. Today, the Seattle Municipal Archives is a fully funded

program with five permanent professional staff, several student workers, volunteers, interns, and an annual personnel budget of approximately \$500,000.

- In 1998 NHPRC awarded the University of Texas at San Antonio a two-year grant of \$76,000 to hire a full-time archivist to process and make available more than 60 collections relating to women's history in south Texas. The grant funds led to the establishment of a formal archives program that now employs eight full-time staff with a budget of approximately \$353,000.

NHPRC grants provide the Archivist of the United States with his primary tool for promoting national and regional cooperation among the state archivists to address such common issues as electronic records management and disaster preparedness and recovery. In Mississippi, emergency funds after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita helped save some of the few remaining historical records on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. NHPRC funding is helping the New York State Archives to identify and preserve the documents of families who lost loved ones in the World Trade Center attack.

NHPRC grants leverage state, local, institutional, foundation, and other private funding by requiring 50% cost sharing. For every federal dollar invested, another dollar is spent.

As the Subcommittee discusses NHPRC funding on Thursday, June 16, please consider the significant benefits that the entire country realizes from this relatively small expenditure. This tiny agency (by federal standards) has provided critically needed seed money to ensure the preservation of and access to evidence of the full American story, from the records that protect the rights and privileges of individual citizens to those that reflect our cultural heritage.

We hope that you and your colleagues will support funding for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission of at least \$10 million in FY 2012.

Sincerely,



Helen R. Tibbo
President, 2010 – 2011

cc: Laura Hogshead, Minority Staff