



**March 18, 2026**

The Honorable Rand Paul  
Chair  
Committee on Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs  
442 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Gary C. Peters  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security and  
Governmental Affairs  
442 Hart Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Paul and Ranking Member Peters:

On behalf of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), the largest and oldest professional association for archivists in the United States, we write to express key considerations regarding the leadership needs of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The ever-evolving landscape for archives and records management in the second-quarter of the twenty-first century presents a host of challenges for the next Archivist of the United States (AOTUS). These challenges must be met by steadfast leadership committed to long-term investments in technology, infrastructure, staffing, security, and engagement with the public and stakeholders across the United States and the world.

NARA is the largest archives in the United States, tasked with preserving and providing access to an ever-growing collection, currently comprising over 13 billion pages of documents; nearly 100 million images, charts, maps, and artifacts; and 1 petabyte of digital data (33 billion electronic documents). These records are held by 40 facilities in 17 states, including 27 public research rooms and 16 presidential libraries. The 2,500 permanent staff at these facilities serve 45,000 in-person researchers and 85,000 remote inquiries annually, separate from an additional 1.5 million requests for veterans' records. Additionally, NARA holds over 300,000 cubic feet of classified records.<sup>1</sup> In NARA's 2024 annual report, the stated goal was to reduce the backlog of unprocessed materials to be equal to 10% of total archival holdings. That 10% amounts to 1.3 billion pages and 100 TB of data.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> NARA, *National Archives by the Numbers*, <https://www.archives.gov/about/info/national-archives-by-the-numbers>.

<sup>2</sup> NARA, *FY2024 Annual Performance Report*, <https://www.archives.gov/about/plans-reports/performance-accountability>.

These incredibly large numbers represent a portion of the work within NARA’s purview. In 2022, only 42% of federal agencies transferred permanent non-electronic records to NARA, and just 20% of agencies transferred permanent electronic records.<sup>3</sup> If all agencies were transferring records as they should be, NARA’s backlogs would be exponentially greater. The incoming AOTUS must 1) work across the federal government to ensure broad compliance with the Federal Records Act, which includes the transfer of permanent records to NARA, and 2) empower NARA staff to manage the predictable increase in records management duties that would result from regular compliance with records statutes.

As noted, compliance with federal records laws by government agencies is far from what it should be. As such, the people of the United States are at risk of losing valuable records that document the operations of our government. In the short term, this lessens the ability of the people, and their representatives, to hold the government accountable. In the long term, this will result in glaring gaps about the history of the United States. Furthermore, compliance with records management guidelines maximizes efficiencies in the government. There is no doubt that our government leaders must prioritize NARA’s efforts.

NARA’s workforce—over 2,500 permanent employees—is the backbone of the wide variety of services that the agency provides. The staff, in the 2024 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, expressed their commitment to these services with over 90% agreement with the statements “Employees in my work unit meet the needs of our customers,” “It is important to me that my work contribute to the common good,” and “Employees in my work unit contribute positively to my agency’s performance.” Unfortunately, the staff did not feel the same about the leaders of the organization, with less than 50% of staff agreeing with the statements “In my organization, senior leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce,” and “Management involves employees in decisions that affect their work.”<sup>4</sup> These results match historical trends for over a decade. It is evident that the professional archives staff at NARA take their work seriously and they know that they provide valuable services to American taxpayers. They deserve leaders who are similarly committed to high-quality work on behalf of everyone in the United States.

Professional organizations representing archives and archivists have come to expect leadership for the field as well as regular engagement with NARA leadership. Recently, this engagement has waned, to the detriment of the field of archives and records management across the country. No longer does the AOTUS regularly engage with SAA and its leadership to share knowledge and advocate for the larger profession, nor is there an external affairs position in the agency dedicated to communicating information to stakeholders such as SAA. Furthermore, an extensive amount of external information available to the public is slowly growing out of date. As of

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<sup>3</sup> National Coalition for History, *A Program to Support and Strengthen the National Archives*, 2024, p. 24, <https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/document/32321-national-coalition-history-working-group-national-archives-program-support-and>.

<sup>4</sup> NARA, *Annual Employee Survey*, 2024, <https://www.archives.gov/about/plans-reports/employee-survey>.

March 2026, the agency’s most recent Records and Information Management Assessment, Federal Agency Records Management reports, Records Management Oversight reports, Information Security Oversight Office annual reports, and National Declassification Center Quarterly reports date to FY2023 or FY2024.<sup>5</sup> In fact, NARA’s website still includes a point person for external affairs despite the fact that the staffer left the agency nearly one year ago and has not been replaced.<sup>6</sup>

NARA engages with archives large and small across the United States via the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), which provides grants “to preserve, publish, and encourage the use of documentary sources, created in every medium ranging from quill pen to computer, relating to the history of the United States.” Today, the bulk of the deliverables created through NHPRC projects are digital projects available freely to everyone in the world at the end of a web connection. For instance, *Founders Online* provides free access to over 184,000 searchable documents from 1706 to 1836—a vital source for educators, students, and the public in this year marking the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, over 45 years, NHPRC’s budget has decreased to 1.2% of NARA’s total budget allocation from nearly 5% of the agency’s budget in 1980.<sup>8</sup> Robust support for NHPRC serves state and local archives and positions NARA as a leader in making history accessible and meaningful for millions of Americans.

The mission of NARA is essential and complex. The non-partisan work of the staff employed by the organization includes managing and providing access to veterans’ records; coordinating declassification of classified materials; and the processing of FOIA requests. The breadth of work undertaken within the agency is extensive, and the leader of the organization must have a clear vision for managing the complexities of this broad scope of work, spanning from the preservation of our nation’s founding documents to the assurance of the integrity and security of contemporary electronic records. The AOTUS must serve as an advocate for this invaluable work in the face of diminishing budgets, aging infrastructure, and ever-growing collections (88,498 cubic feet of analog records and 463 terabytes in 2024<sup>9</sup>). It is essential that AOTUS have a keen understanding of NARA’s needs to ensure NARA is able to meet its mission and responsibilities, not just now but well into the future.

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<sup>5</sup> National Declassification Center quarterly reports, <https://www.archives.gov/declassification/ndc>; Federal Agency Records Management reports, <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/resources/reporting>; Information Security Oversight Office Annual Reports, <https://www.archives.gov/isoo/reports/annual-report-archive.html>; Records and Information Management Assessments, <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/resources/rm-assessments>; Records Management Oversight reports, <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/resources/oversight>.

<sup>6</sup> As of March 15, 2026, NARA’s Professional Engagement webpage lists Meg Philips as the external affairs liaison, a position she vacated in May 2025: <https://web.archive.org/web/20260315003602/https://www.archives.gov/about/engagement>.

<sup>7</sup> *Founders Online*, <https://founders.archives.gov/>.

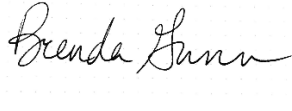
<sup>8</sup> National Coalition for History, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> NARA, *National Archives by the Numbers*.

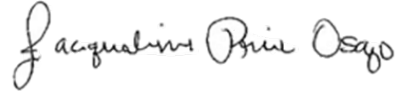
Sincerely,



**Derek T. Mosley**  
SAA President



**Brenda Gunn**  
SAA Vice President



**Jacqueline Price Osafo**  
SAA Chief Executive Officer