

November 16, 2020

The Honorable John Kennedy  
Chairman, Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, DC 20510  
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Dear Senator Kennedy:

The American Historical Association requests that the Senate Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government reconsider its vote to eliminate funding for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) for FY 2021. The House has voted to appropriate \$7 million for the NHPRC's work, a very small amount that could be readily incorporated into the Senate's bill with only minimal impact on overall spending.

The American Historical Association is the largest organization of professional historians in the world. Our approximately 11,500 members teach in high schools and colleges, work in museums and other history institutions with public audiences, or just enjoy reading and supporting historical work.

The NHPRC provides millions of Americans with ready digital access to materials essential to civic education and an understanding of the documentary basis of American history. As the grant-making arm of the National Archives and Records Administration, the NHPRC funds digital and print publication of documentary collections of nationally significant Americans, most notably, of course, the nation's Founders. Funding from the NHPRC has leveraged sufficient support to enable grantees to make these essential sources available online without charge. This is especially important right now, as teachers are forced to use online materials due to the limitations that COVID-19 has placed on education at all levels. Students across the nation have access to the primary sources that document the founding and evolution of the United States and American institutions.

The NHPRC also provides funding that supports disaster preparedness and coordination among state archivists nationwide.

The NHPRC has enjoyed bipartisan support for a long time, with senators on both sides of the aisle repeatedly and emphatically rejecting suggestions to dismantle it. The current appropriation is barely adequate to support ongoing programs and implement critical new digital initiatives. The budget, currently \$6.5 million, has grown only \$70,000 since 2001; in real terms, the resources have fallen by one-third.

NHPRC grants leverage state, local, institutional, foundation, and other funding by requiring 50 percent cost sharing: federal funds are matched dollar for dollar by other sources. The American Historical Association urges you to fund the NHPRC's work at \$7 million in FY 2021 to enable the agency to sustain its work on behalf of the nation's history and heritage.

Sincerely,



James R. Grossman  
Executive Director