

September 12, 2022

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-6250

Dear Members of the Committee:

The American Historical Association (AHA) enthusiastically supports the nomination of Dr. Colleen Shogan as the 11th Archivist of the United States. Chartered by Congress in 1889 “for the promotion of historical studies, the collection and preservation of historical manuscripts, and for kindred purposes in the interest of American history and of history in America,” the AHA has a deep interest in the role of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) as a pillar of the nation’s history and heritage. We are confident that Dr. Shogan can both provide the vision and leadership necessary to guide the Archives in its task of preserving federal records held in trust for the public, and act with dedication and integrity in continuing to ensure public access to those records.

NARA has a dual charge to preserve the official documentation of the nation’s past, and to ensure that public records serve the purposes of evidence, accountability, and authenticity in protecting the rights of all citizens. It is essential that the Archivist of the United States fulfills the duties of the office in a nonpartisan manner to ensure that NARA performs its critical role in the documentation of the Federal government’s actions and decisions. At the same time, as NARA faces the growing challenge of preserving, processing, and making accessible increasing numbers of electronic and paper records, the Archivist must possess the diplomatic and rhetorical skills necessary to advocate for the agency’s programs on Capitol Hill, within the Administration, and with its varied stakeholders. Dr. Shogan’s senior-level positions in Washington institutions have spanned multiple presidential administrations and Congresses, and she has demonstrated her commitment to serving the public with nonpartisan integrity.

While Dr. Shogan is not a historian, she has worked effectively and productively with our members in such important settings as the Library of Congress, the White House Historical Society, and the America250 Commission. She has been especially effective as a collaborator across disciplines, drawing on her political science background to complement the work of archivists, librarians, and historians. Her long experience at the Library of Congress anchors her impressive resume. Consider especially her careful nonpartisan scholarship at the Congressional Research Service and subsequent management position there, which drew upon and nurtured her deep appreciation for the imperative of careful documentation and responsible nonpartisan leadership.

Beginning with the “Congress and History” conference in 2017 and into our current collaboration as members of the History Education Advisory Council of the America250 Commission, I have developed a deep respect for Dr. Shogan’s professionalism, expertise, and integrity. The Archivist of the United States must have these characteristics to combine the roles of visionary and hands-on manager that this position requires. The American people would be fortunate to have Dr. Colleen Shogan as the steward of our nation’s documentary record.

Sincerely,



James Grossman
Executive Director