March 21, 2023

Dear Chairman Womack and Ranking Member Hoyer:

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 the President’s full funding request of $443.2 million for the agency’s operating expenses and $10 million for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) in the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) 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 faces enormous challenges. For example, as of September there was a backlog of nearly 440,000 requests for veterans’ records at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, on December 31, 2022, NARA implemented a new policy that requires federal agencies to submit all records to NARA in electronic form; paper records are no longer accepted. This major policy shift requires increased funding to make that transition. NARA has also committed itself by FY 2026 to digitize 500 million pages of records and make them available online to the public through the National Archives Catalog.

We appreciate the Subcommittee’s support for NHPRC in recent years, and it is crucial that it be funded at $10 million. In addition to distributing grants across the country the leverage private funds, NHPRC supports grants that tackle major archival issues, such as preservation of electronic records, disaster preparedness, and coordination and communication among archivists nationwide.

We understand the many difficult choices the Subcommittee faces in constructing its FY 2024 budget bill. Thank you for your consideration of this request for NARA.

Sincerely,
Bill Foster  
Member of Congress

Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress