



National Humanities Alliance

September 7, 2006

The Honorable Allen Weinstein
Archivist of the United States
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001

Dear Dr. Weinstein,

I write on behalf of the National Humanities Alliance to communicate our deep concern with the proposed reduction of operating hours for research facilities at the National Archives Building and National Archives at College Park. While we do not support the change of hours outlined in the interim rules issued in July, we applaud your interest in seeking public comments on this important issue.

The National Humanities Alliance is a coalition of more than ninety national, state and local organizations and institutions dedicated to the advancement of research, education, preservation and public programs in the humanities. Our members include scholarly societies representing hundreds of college/university faculty, K-12 teachers, graduate students, independent researchers, writers and others who conduct research at the National Archives. Scholars, students, policymakers and the general public benefit from this use of records through the publication and dissemination of academic analyses, books, news reports, documentary films, museum exhibits, and course curricula.

As the nation's recordkeeper, the Archives is one of the nation's most important resources for the documentation and study of American history, government, politics, and society. Our government's responsibility to ensure broad public access to these records is at least as important as its responsibility to collect and maintain them. We are concerned that NARA's proposed elimination of evening hours will create a serious barrier to access for out-of-town researchers who try to make the maximum use of their time in Washington, DC by working days and evenings. In addition, researchers' ability to access the Archives on Saturday constitutes a potentially significant cost savings in travel, and allows for further ability to extend research outside of the normal work week. Full- and part-time faculty, as well as graduate students, may have extremely limited financial assistance (if any) for their work. Travel funds for higher education institutions across the country have been cut back in recent years; similarly, federal and private support for research fellowships has also declined.

While we realize that your institution faces enormous budgetary challenges, we ask that NARA reconsider the proposed elimination of evening and weekend hours for research. We agree with NARA's assessment of the importance of its many "mission-critical activities" beyond

staffing of research and reading rooms, including staff response to the online and written requests of researchers, and the cataloging and declassification of new and existing archives holdings. Scholars within our community have praised the professionalism and expertise of the Archives staff, and are unequivocal in describing the value of this assistance to identification and retrieval of documents critical to the research process.

Given the centrality of the Archives' mission to our nation's democratic and educational aims, we regret the inadequacy of the Archives current and projected budgets. The NHA is committed to communicating these concerns to both the administration and Congress.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Jones Irons". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Jones Irons
Executive Director
National Humanities Alliance

National Humanities Alliance Member Organizations

African Studies Association
American Academy of Arts and Sciences
American Academy of Religion
American Anthropological Association
American Association for State and Local History
American Association of Museums
American Association of University Professors
American Comparative Literature Association
American Council of Learned Societies
American Dialect Society
American Folklore Society
American Historical Association
American Library Association
American Musicological Society
American Numismatic Society
American Philological Association
American Philosophical Association
American Political Science Association
American Society for Aesthetics
American Society for Legal History
American Society for Theatre Research
American Sociological Association
American Studies Association
Association for Asian Studies
Association for Documentary Editing
Association for Jewish Studies
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of American Geographers
Association of American Law Schools
Association of American Universities
Association of American University Presses
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of Research Libraries
Center for Research Libraries
Center for the Liberal Arts (East Carolina University)
Coalition for Networked Information
College Art Association
Columbia University
Community College Humanities Association
Council of American Overseas Research Centers
Council of Independent Colleges
Council on Library and Information Resources
Dartmouth College
Duke University
Dictionary Society of North America
Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities
(University of California, Berkeley)
Federation of State Humanities Councils
Hall Center for the Humanities (University of Kansas)
Heritage Preservation
History of Science Society
Imagining America (University of Michigan)
Independent Research Libraries Association
Institute for Advanced Study
Institute for the Humanities (University of Michigan)
Institute for the Medical Humanities (University of
Texas Medical Branch)
Linguistic Society of America
Medieval Academy of America
Middle East Studies Association
Minnesota Humanities Commission
Modern Language Association of America
National Communication Association
National Council of Teachers of English
National Humanities Center
Northeast Document Conservation Center
Omohundro Institute of Early American History and
Culture
Organization of American Historians
Phi Beta Kappa Society
Popular Culture Association
Renaissance Society of America
Research Libraries Group
Shakespeare Association of America
Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies
(Princeton University)
Simpson Center for the Humanities (University of
Washington)
Sixteenth Century Society and Conference
Society for Cinema and Media Studies
Society for Ethnomusicology
Society for Music Theory
Society for the History of Technology
Society of Architectural Historians
Society of Biblical Literature
Society of Christian Ethics
SOLINET Southeastern Library Network, Inc.
South Dakota Humanities Council
Stanford Humanities Center
Texas A&M University
The Council of the Humanities (Princeton University)
The Franke Institute for the Humanities (University of
Chicago)
The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi
University at Buffalo (SUNY) Humanities Institute
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
University of Southern California
Virginia Center for the Humanities