

June 23, 2006

The Honorable Conrad Burns
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior and Related Agencies
132 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
Ranking Minority Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior and Related Agencies
160 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Burns and Ranking Member Dorgan:

We write on behalf of our combined memberships--representing 62 research universities, 56 state humanities councils and more than 90 humanities organizations and institutions across the country--to urge increased funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). We understand that your Subcommittee faces extremely difficult choices in crafting its FY 2007 bill. It is in this context that we respectfully request that you provide at least a \$5 million increase for the NEH in FY 2007, by adopting no less than the House-passed level of \$146 million.

The President has proposed flat funding for the NEH for the second year in a row. In addition, the Administration's FY 2007 budget request would cut funding for NEH grant programs by \$1.3 million to offset mandated salary and overhead cost increases. We are deeply concerned about continued erosion of funding of the agency's core programs, including Research, Education, Preservation and Access, Public Programs, Challenge Grants and the Federal/State Partnership. Adjusted for inflation, NEH funding is still only about 60% of its level 10 years ago and 35% of its peak in 1979.

Our member institutions and organizations use NEH grants to maintain a strong system of academic research, education and public programs in the humanities. As the single most important source of support for the humanities in the United States, NEH greatly enriches American intellectual and cultural life. Through wide-reaching public programs and the work of the 56 state humanities councils, NEH makes the best of the humanities available to people throughout the country.

Federal investment in the humanities is critical to educating our citizens, documenting and preserving our rich and diverse cultural heritage, and helping our country address the many challenges we face in the 21st century. Over the last four decades, NEH has promoted wisdom and vision by advancing the study and understanding of history, literature, art, language, archaeology, philosophy and other humanities subjects throughout the United States. Its "We the People" program has, for the past three years, encouraged and enhanced the teaching, study, and understanding of American history and culture.

Additional funding will strengthen NEH's ability to continue to support high-quality, peer-reviewed humanities projects throughout the United States. Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this request.

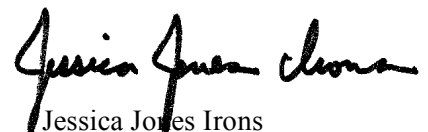
Sincerely,



Robert Berdahl
President
Association of American Universities



Esther Mackintosh
President
Federation of State Humanities Councils



Jessica Jones Irons
Executive Director
National Humanities Alliance