

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 29, 2023

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Financial Service and  
General Government  
110 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Hagerty  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Financial Services and  
General Government  
702 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Van Hollen and Ranking Member Hagerty:

As the subcommittee considers the Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Service and General Government appropriations bill, we request you robustly fund the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

The National Archives is the largest record keeper in the United States and fulfills the crucial function of preserving and providing access to the federal government and historical records.<sup>1</sup> This includes many historic documents that are integral to the foundation of the United States, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. NARA's reach spreads over 40 facilities, 32 regional archives and record centers, and 16 presidential libraries across the country.<sup>2</sup>

NARA facilities are crucial to researchers and veterans. On an average year, the National Personnel Records Center responds to more than one million requests for copies of military records.<sup>3</sup> All of NARA's research rooms have now reopened. However, NARA still has a backlog of hundreds of thousands of veterans' requests and has had to reallocate already stretched resources to address the problem.<sup>4</sup> NARA is also faced with a backlog of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.<sup>5</sup> NARA's in-person research rooms should be fully open and staffed at pre-pandemic levels to meet demand for basic services and records access.

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission is a bridge between the National Archives and the nation's archives. With increased funding, the NHPRC will better enable the

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<sup>1</sup> National Archives, "About the National Archives of the United States," <https://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/1-about-archives.html>.

<sup>2</sup> National Archives, "Visit Us," <https://www.archives.gov/locations#>.

<sup>3</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, "FY 2021 Congressional Justification", February 10, 2020, p. 5, <https://www.archives.gov/files/about/plans-reports/performance-budget/2021performance-budget.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Fedscoop, "House lawmakers introduce bill to address NARA veterans' records backlog," John Hewitt Jones, March 31, 2022, <https://www.fedscoop.com/house-lawmakers-introduce-bill-to-address-nara-veterans-records-backlog/>.

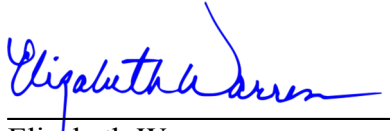
<sup>5</sup> National Archives, "Fiscal Year 2021 Annual Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Report," p.19, <https://www.archives.gov/files/foia/reports/nara-fy21-final.pdf>.

American people, wherever located, to access and use their historical records at their local archives and online.

In the past decade, NARA's responsibilities have increased, but its federal funding for operating expenses has remained stagnant. The lack of adequate resources creates more barriers for Americans trying to prove citizenship, conduct genealogical research, and gain access to veterans' benefits. Lack of access to records and primary sources also hinders the ability of historians to interpret our past and promote robust civic education. Underfunding also obstructs transparency: veteran records, FOIA requests, and records that need to be declassified have all been backlogged because of the lack of funding.<sup>6</sup> Finally, it hinders NARA's ability to hire qualified archivists to both serve patrons and develop records management systems needed for the influx of electronic records. These resources are especially necessary this year as the National Archives approaches the June 30, 2024 electronic records transfer deadline.<sup>7</sup>

We believe this funding request is needed to address the backlog created by insufficient funding over the past decade, and to provide the National Archives with the resources it needs to fulfill its goal of preserving historical records and ensuring they are accessible to everyone. Thank you for your time and consideration to this request and your continued support in sustaining and strengthening the National Archives and Records Administration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



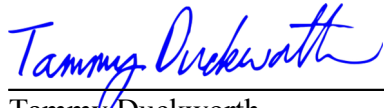
Jon Ossoff  
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Archivist of the United States to David S. Ferriero to the U.S. House of Representatives, December 10, 2020, on file with the Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren.

<sup>7</sup> Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies from Director Shalanda D. Young and Acting Archivist of the United States Debra Steidel Wall, December 23, 2022, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/M\\_23\\_07-M-Memo-Electronic-Records\\_final.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/M_23_07-M-Memo-Electronic-Records_final.pdf).



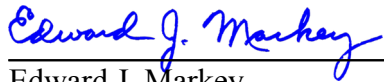
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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



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Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



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Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



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Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



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Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



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Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator




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Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator

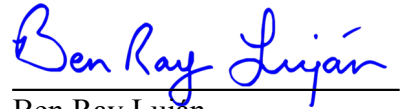


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Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



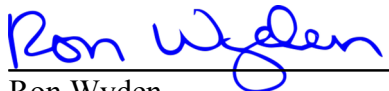
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United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Peter Welch  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator

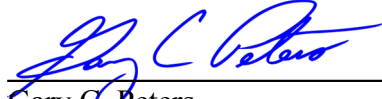


Tina Smith  
United States Senator



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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



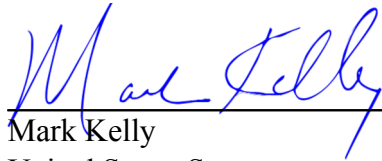
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Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



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Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



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Mark Kelly  
United States Senator



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James E. Risch  
United States Senator