

May xx, 2014

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment & Related Agencies
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Moran
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Interior, Environment & Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member Moran,

On behalf of the board of directors of the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the executive directors, volunteer board members, and supporters of the state and territorial councils across the country, we urge the Subcommittee to support FY 2015 funding of \$154.5 million for the National Endowment for the Humanities and \$46 million for the state humanities councils. We are very grateful to the members of this Subcommittee for your past support. The funding included in the FY 2014 omnibus bill for state humanities councils was extremely helpful to our organizations, particularly following the severe cuts of the previous year.

Councils are careful stewards of these federal funds, which they administer strategically to maximize benefits for the communities in their states. As full partners of the NEH, councils receive their core funding through the Federal/State Partnership line of the NEH budget and use that funding to leverage additional support from foundations, corporations, private individuals, and state governments. In FY 2013, councils **leveraged \$5.00 for every federal dollar** they awarded in grants to local institutions. To stretch resources and strengthen the cultural and educational networks in the more than **6,100 communities** they served, councils worked with more than **9,300 partners**—libraries and museum, social service agencies, chambers of commerce, medical institutions, religious groups, community colleges, and many others.

These numbers tell part of the story—but not the most important part. Above all, council programs improve individual lives and the civic and cultural vitality of the communities in your states. Below are a few these programs.

Council programs preserve local history and culture. The Idaho Humanities Council's "Wilderness Considered" reading and discussion series, developed to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Wilderness Act, explores Idahoans' past and present relationship to wild places. The Minnesota Humanities Center collaborated with other organizations to develop an exhibit, "Why Treaties Matter: Self-Government in the Dakota and Ojibwe Nations," that has given more than 50,000 Minnesotans in 39 communities a deeper understanding of Minnesota land use and the treatment of indigenous people.

Councils serve veterans. Cal Humanities' multi-year program, "War Comes Home," will include hundreds of events that will help veterans, their families, and communities explore how Californians are welcoming their returning veterans. Literature and Medicine, created by the Maine Humanities Council but now offered throughout the country, is a reading and discussion program that enables veterans' caregivers to better understand and empathize with their patients, which improves the quality of their care.

Councils serve rural communities. The highly successful Museum on Main Street program is a partnership between state councils and the Smithsonian designed specifically for rural communities. Through the Oklahoma Humanities Council, the small town of Frederick, Oklahoma hosted the music-themed exhibit “New Harmonies,” exploring music, history, and cultural movements such as desegregation.

Council programs reach citizens of all ages, incomes, and levels of education. Council programs engage young adults, seniors, ethnic communities, immigrants, low-income families, prison populations, and Native Americans. The New York Council for the Humanities, in collaboration with other agencies and organizations, provided grants to neighborhood-based immigrant and cultural groups to encourage unity through active engagement between new immigrants and their longer-term neighbors as well as residents of different faiths.

Council programs boost local economies. In a state whose fourth largest economic driver is tourism, Ohio Humanities promotes heritage tourism through grants and technical assistance that enable communities to offer travelers authentic place-based experiences. A recent economic impact study by the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau estimated the Virginia Festival of the Book's total impact at \$3.9 million. The Utah Humanities Council’s book festival brings readers and writers together throughout the state, not only enriching the intellectual and cultural lives of communities and but also contributing to their economies.

Council programs enhance national security. Council programs foster knowledge of global issues, vital for informed citizen participation in the political decision-making process. For example, the Maine Humanities Council offers “The World in Your Library: A Foreign Policy Speakers Series,” a program in which local libraries host three one-hour presentations with discussion, providing residents the opportunity to explore foreign policy issues with experts.

Council programs promote lifelong learning through community conversations, lectures, reading and discussion series, teacher institutes and seminars, and family literacy programs, among other activities. The Oklahoma Humanities Council funds culturally rich programming anchored in scholarship, including the 2014 “Native Crossroads Film Festival and Symposium” in Norman, Oklahoma. The Humanities Washington Speakers Bureau connects scholars with audiences in rural communities throughout the state on topics such as “Territorial Voices: A Civil War Reader’s Theater” and “The Puget Sound Indian Wars of 1855.”

These examples offer only a small sampling of the programs that enrich and enliven communities throughout the nation. We believe they demonstrate the significant benefits to be derived from the modest federal investment of \$46 million for the councils and \$154.5 million for NEH.

Respectfully,

Kate Stephenson, Chair

Esther Mackintosh, President

Please note that affiliations on the following lists are provided for identification purposes only.