

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 15, 2026

The Honorable Bill Hagerty  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Financial Services and  
General Government  
251 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Financial Services and  
General Government  
728 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Hagerty and Ranking Member Reed:

As the subcommittee considers the Fiscal Year 2027 Financial Services and General Government appropriations bill, we request that 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, fulfilling the crucial function of preserving and providing access to federal government documents and historical records, and serving as the repository for both classified and unclassified records from all federal agencies.<sup>1</sup> The National Archives also maintains many of our nation's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and many others.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the broad national audience NARA serves through its dynamic online presence, the Archives' reach is spread over 40 facilities, 31 regional archives and record centers, and 16 presidential libraries across the country.<sup>3</sup>

These NARA facilities are crucial access points for researchers, veterans, journalists, scientists, and many more. In fact, on average, the National Personnel Records Center responds to more than one million requests a year for copies of military records.<sup>4</sup> NARA has completed processing its backlog of hundreds of thousands of veterans' requests by deploying technology improvements, adding staff, and expanding work hours and contract labor.<sup>5</sup> NARA receives more than 4,000 new requests each day, including hundreds of thousands of requests annually from researchers in multiple disciplines.<sup>6</sup> More resources, including additional support for in-

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<sup>1</sup> National Archives, "About the National Archives of the United States," December 30, 2024, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/1-about-archives.html>, National Archives, "Background on NARA Classified MOUs," August 15, 2016, <https://www.archives.gov/declassification/ndc/background.html>.

<sup>2</sup> National Archives, "About the National Archives of the United States," December 30, 2024, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/general-info-leaflets/1-about-archives.html>.

<sup>3</sup> National Archives, "Visit Us," <https://www.archives.gov/locations#>; National Archives, "Presidential Libraries," <https://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries>.

<sup>4</sup> National Archives and Records Administration, "FY 2021 Congressional Justification," February 10, 2020, p. 6, <https://www.archives.gov/files/about/plans-reports/performance-budget/2021performance-budget.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> National Archives, "NARA Eliminates Pandemic backlog of Veteran Records Requests," press release, January 24, 2024, <https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2024/nr24-10>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

person research activities, are needed to meet this demand and remain sustainable in light of all the other work for which NARA is responsible.<sup>7</sup> In addition, like many executive branch agencies, NARA has also seen an increase in its backlog of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, which places a continuous and potentially unsustainable administrative burden on its workforce and systems.<sup>8</sup> The agency must continue to hire qualified archivists to serve patrons, develop records management systems needed for the influx of electronic records, and complete its digitization efforts.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, NARA has made significant progress toward its goal of digitizing all of its analog holdings, but its extraordinary goal of digitizing 500 million pages by 2026 falls drastically short of the 12 billion pages NARA must process to transition all of its records to a digital format.<sup>10</sup> NARA requires more funding to manage the enormous scope of its digitization efforts, including the challenge of making this vast electronic archive discoverable to all, and to make good on other elements of its 2026-2030 strategic plan to transform access and engagement, elevate service, and grow capacity.<sup>11</sup>

The NHPRC is a bridge between the National Archives and the nation's archives. The NHPRC State Board Programming Grants program encourages an understanding of democracy, history, and culture by supporting states' efforts to preserve and increase online access to historical records.<sup>12</sup> NHPRC funding ensures papers of national importance are broadly accessible to all Americans and preserves state, local, and regional histories that make up our diverse national story, ensuring they are accessible today and remain so for future generations.<sup>13</sup> Currently, the NHPRC's limited budget is not sufficient to meet the vast needs of state and local archives, putting our cultural heritage at risk. With increased funding, the NHPRC can better enable the 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.<sup>14</sup> 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

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> National Archives, "FISCAL YEAR 2023 Annual Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Report," <https://www.archives.gov/files/foia/reports/nara-fy-2023-annual-foia-report.pdf>.

<sup>9</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).

<sup>10</sup> National Archives, "Strategy for Digitizing Archival Materials for Public Access, 2015-2024," December 2014, <https://www.archives.gov/digitization/strategy.html>; National Archives, "Strategic Plan 2022-2026," April 9, 2024, <https://www.archives.gov/about/plans-reports/strategic-plan/strategic-plan-2022-2026#:~:text=1.2%20By%20FY%202026%2C%20NARA,available%20to%20the%20public%20online>.

<sup>11</sup> National Archives, "Strategic Plan Framework: 2026-2030," <https://www.archives.gov/files/about/plans-reports/strategic-plan/strategic-plan-framework-2026-2030.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> National Archives, "State Board Programming Grants," March 26, 2025, <https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/announcement/state.html>.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> The Washington Post, "A digital tsunami is coming. The National Archives is in trouble.," David E. Hoffman, September 20, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/09/20/national-archives-troubles-digital/>.

historians to interpret our past and promote robust civic education. Underfunding also obstructs transparency and open government. FOIA requests and records that need to be declassified have all been backlogged because of the lack of funding.<sup>15</sup> Insufficient funding hinders NARA's ability to hire qualified archivists to serve patrons, develop records management systems needed for the influx of electronic records, and complete its digitization efforts.<sup>16</sup>

We believe our 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 of this request and your continued support in sustaining and strengthening the National Archives and Records Administration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Tina Smith  
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



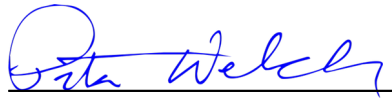
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



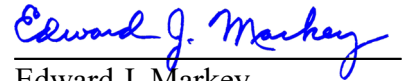
Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator

<sup>15</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].

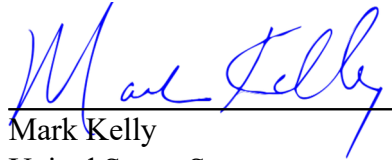
<sup>16</sup> Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies from Director Shalanda D. Young and Acting Archivist of the United States Debra Steidel Wall, December 23, 2022, [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/m\\_23\\_07-m-memo-electronic-records\\_final.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/m_23_07-m-memo-electronic-records_final.pdf).



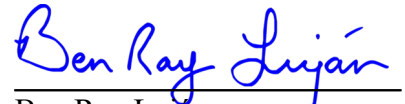
Peter Welch  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Mark Kelly  
United States Senator



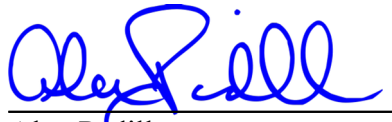
Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator



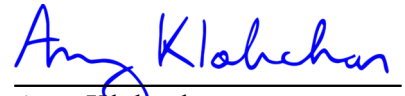
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



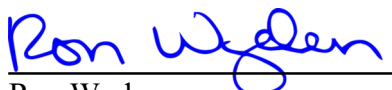
Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto  
United States Senator



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Elissa Slotkin  
United States Senator