

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES (NEH)

ENRICHING AMERICA'S CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- **Support a significant budget increase for NEH in the FY 2010 Interior Appropriations bill. Additional funding will help address unmet needs for NEH grant programs that advance research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities throughout the United States.**

NEH Annual Appropriations, FY 1994 to present (in millions of dollars)

Fiscal Year	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09
Appropriation	177.5	172.0	110.0	110.0	110.7	110.7	115.3	120.0	124.5	124.9	135.3	138.1	140.9	141.1	144.7	155*

Note: Figures above are not adjusted for inflation. Source: NEH *Pending Congressional approval of Omnibus appropriations bill

TALKING POINTS

- **Democracy demands wisdom.** As the founding legislation of NEH states, "an advanced civilization must not limit its efforts to science and technology alone, but must give full value and support to the other great branches of scholarly and cultural activity in order to achieve a better understanding of the past, a better analysis of the present, and a better view of the future."

At its peak, NEH's annual appropriation was 16 percent of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) funding. By 2007, that appropriation had dropped to 2.5 percent. Over the past 30 years, while federal funding for NSF grew over 200 percent, federal funding for NEH declined by 60 percent. Such increasing disparity in federal funding of scholarship among the disciplines has compromised our ability to understand and effectively engage the forces characterizing our contemporary world.

- **Advancement in the humanities is critical to our nation's well-being and continued status as a world leader.** In this time of rapid globalization and new challenges to our national and economic security, the American people need the knowledge and skills of the humanities—those fields of study concerned with the human experience, thought, and creativity.
- **A small investment through NEH yields high returns.** NEH awards seed money for high-quality projects that leverage millions of dollars in non-federal support every year. Since 1965, NEH matching grants have stimulated over \$2 billion in non-federal giving.
- **The humanities are innovative.** The humanities help us understand the social and cultural impact of advances in science and technology. Humanities scholars are using digital technology to generate new knowledge, enhance access to works of enduring value, and improve education.

BACKGROUND

The NEH, an independent federal agency, is the largest single funder of humanities programs in the United States, providing grants for high-quality humanities projects in four primary funding areas: preservation, education, research, and public programs. Grants typically go to cultural institutions such as museums, archives, libraries, colleges, universities, state humanities councils, public television and radio stations, film producers, and to individual scholars. NEH extends its reach through annual grants to its partner institutions, the state humanities councils, located in every state and U.S. territory.

President Bush's FY 2009 budget proposal requested flat funding for NEH at \$144.4 million. This budget did not provide adequate support for NEH grant programs, even to continue funding at the previous year's level. Rather, the president's proposal sought to offset increases for overhead costs and administration priorities through cuts to regular program funds of nearly \$7 million.

(continued)

NEH is funded at a level of \$155 million for FY 2009, pending final passage of the FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations bill.

- In 1979 NEH funding was equivalent to \$415 million (2007 constant dollars). The current budget represents about a third of this past level of demonstrated operating effectiveness.
- The nominal peak in funding for NEH occurred in 1994. At this time, the agency was funded at a level of \$177.5 million (\$248 million in 2007 constant dollars, when adjusted for inflation).

What are the humanities?

According to the NEH's founding legislation, "The term 'humanities' includes, but is not limited to, the study of the following: language, both modern and classical; linguistics; literature; history; jurisprudence; philosophy; archaeology; comparative religion; ethics; the history, criticism and theory of the arts; those aspects of social sciences which have humanistic content and employ humanistic methods."

NEH and the Arts

The NEH plays an important role in promoting knowledge of and appreciation for the arts in America. NEH makes grants to promote the documentation, understanding, and preservation of the arts in a broad range of areas such as: visual art, art history, theater, literature, dance, music, and world cultures. The Endowment provides critical support for scholarly research in the history, theory, and criticism of the arts. NEH professional development seminars for K-12 and college teachers help improve the teaching and learning of art history in classrooms across the United States. Agency-supported film and radio programs reach millions of viewers, helping to advance the public understanding of and appreciation for the arts. NEH provides critical resources to the nation's art museums in the form of grants to support exhibitions, exhibition catalogs, facilities improvements, collections enhancement, and preservation training. Preservation projects supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities have helped save literally millions of culturally and historically significant objects at risk due to their composition or storage conditions.

In 2008, NEH launched *Picturing America*. Through this initiative, the Endowment distributed poster-size, high-quality reproductions of forty American masterpieces to schools and libraries nationwide. The images include paintings, presidential portraits, Native American art, and architectural photography. To aid in the teaching of American history, additional learning materials support the posters and lesson plans for teachers. Poster sets were distributed to more than 76,000 K-12 public, private, parochial, and charter schools, home school consortia, Head Start centers, and public libraries in the United States and its territories.