



The National Association of Government Archives & Records Administrators *The Government Archives and Records Administration Experts*

September 24, 2021

Support of the Federal Budget for NARA and NHPRC Joint Statement of NAGARA, SAA, and CoSA

On May 28, 2021, the White House released the President's proposed \$6 trillion [budget](#) for the 2022 fiscal year. The proposed budget represents a significant step forward for the preservation of and public access to the records of government and efficient management of those records. The clearest support is a much-needed increase in funding for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and a restoration of funding for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), both of which contribute significantly to the practice of public records keeping and preservation in the United States. These increases would reverse a trend of declining funding for both NARA and NHPRC at a crucial time in America.

Funding for the National Archives and Records Administration covers a broad range of statutory responsibilities: operating Presidential libraries and research centers, facilitating citizen access to public records, working with federal agencies to ensure the proper classification, retention, and destruction of public records, managing a growing volume of electronic records, conducting painstaking declassification review of public records, and maintaining numerous federal records facilities throughout the country.

The work of NARA is more essential than ever, especially given e-government mandates¹ that require federal agencies to transition to electronic recordkeeping for all of their operations. NARA must be prepared to accept an incoming deluge of electronic records from federal agencies. It must keep up not only with the changing technological landscape of government but also with the legal requirements and the expectations of the American public. In order to do this, NARA must be adequately funded.

State and local governments, too, possess records that most directly impact the lives of citizens and cannot be ignored. NHPRC is the only dedicated federal funding program for the management and preservation of records, as the commission passes funding onto states and localities that seek to build capacity to preserve records while making them accessible to the public as freely as possible. Along with grants offered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Save America's Treasures Program at the National Park Service, NHPRC grants make up a significant source of funding for the country's essential records.

The importance of public records to the apparatus of government and citizens' ability to audit and hold accountable their elected and appointed officials cannot be overstated. The work of information professionals in government is essential to its efficient and effective operation. NARA's total budget accounts for less than two one-hundredths of one percent (0.02%) of the total \$1.52 trillion of discretionary funding in the federal budget. With its current modest funding, NARA accomplishes the essential work of preserving and protecting information that allows government officials to make

¹ OMB Memorandum M-19-21 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/M-19-21-new-2.pdf>



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informed decisions, protects records of permanent value, and provides pathways for the public to access those records. All of this must be accomplished despite possessing the challenging mandate of preserving essential evidence of government action in an age of cyber-warfare and enhanced need for access to reliable, authentic, and trustworthy public records.

Furthermore, beyond its specific statutory responsibilities, NARA is positioned to be the lead organization for the hundreds of smaller archival and recordkeeping agencies throughout federal, state, and local government. NARA cannot be the standard-bearer of archival best practices nor can it lead the way in developing standards for preserving information in emerging technologies without adequate funding.

We support [H.R. 4345](#) and urge Congress to pass this bill to fund the National Archives and Records Administration and National Historical Publications and Records Commission at levels in line with the President's request. We call on Congress to continue restoring archival and records management funding to the levels necessary to preserve public records, for the people, indefinitely.

Council of State Archivists (CoSA)

National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA)

Society of American Archivists (SAA)