

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES (NEH)

ENRICHING AMERICA'S CULTURAL AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- Support a budget of \$177 million for NEH in the FY 2009 Interior Appropriations bill. This increase will significantly expand funding for NEH grant programs that advance research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities throughout the United States.
- Restore at least \$6.8 million for the Preservation & Access and Challenge Grants Divisions, cut in the president's FY 2009 budget proposal.
- Support appropriation of new funds, above the FY 2008 enacted level, for implementation of new NEH programmatic initiatives proposed in the president's FY 2009 budget request.

NEH Annual Appropriations, FY94 to Present (in millions of dollars)

Fiscal Year	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08
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

Note: Figures above are not adjusted for inflation. Source: NEH

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."
- Americans face an increasingly complex and interconnected world. To compete effectively in the global economy, our citizens need the broad tools that an education in the humanities provides, including knowledge of world cultures and history, language proficiency, critical thinking, and analysis.
- 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.

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. Dr. Bruce Cole, the Chairman of NEH, is a distinguished professor of art history, specializing in the Renaissance.

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

NEH is currently funded at a level of \$144.7 million.

- 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.

(continued)

- The nominal peak in funding for NEH occurred in 1994. At this time, the agency was funded at a level of \$177.5 million (not adjusted for inflation)—the level we recommend for FY 2009.

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.”

Picturing America

As part of a newly launched initiative, *Picturing America*, the NEH will distribute 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. Supported by additional learning materials and lesson plans for teachers, poster sets will be distributed to K–12 public, private, parochial, and charter schools, home school consortia, and public libraries in the United States and its territories.

NEH and the Arts

The NEH plays an important role in promoting knowledge of and appreciation for the arts in America. 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.

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. To demonstrate the depth of NEH support for the visual arts, here are just a few examples of grants made within the last few years:

- **Exhibits**—a \$367,200 grant to the Jewish Museum in New York to implement *Action/Abstraction: Abstract Expressionism and Postwar America*, a major traveling exhibit examining the emergence of abstract art and the political and social context of the postwar period (2007)
- **Endowment Building**—a \$130,900 challenge grant to Cornell University for an endowment to enhance educational programming and to construct a study center in the university’s art museum (2007)
- **Preservation and Access**—a \$140,650 preservation grant to the Harn Museum at the University of Florida to improve storage and environmental conditions of 6,200 works of art (2006)
- **Public Programs**—a \$21,142 grant to the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco to support educational and public programs examining the legacy of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut (2007)
- **Scholarly Research**—a \$40,000 fellowship to a scholar at Harvard University in Cambridge, MA to research *cartes de visite* portraits and the politics of photography in nineteenth century America (2007)
- **Teacher Training**—a \$111,081 grant to Claremont Graduate University to support two one-week, on-site workshops for seventy school teachers exploring the history, art, and architecture of the U. S. Capitol (2007)
- **Curriculum Development**—a \$45,574 grant to the Lehman College Art Gallery in New York to develop a website documenting fifty historically and architecturally significant buildings in the Bronx (2007)
- **Film**—a \$100,000 grant to Film Odyssey, Inc. to develop a one-hour television documentary on American painter and graphic artist James McNeill Whistler (2006)