

Some positive news on NARA's budgets

We've had a bit of good news recently about budgets for NARA, and I want to share some details with you.

First, Congress passed and the President signed a continuing resolution that provides NARA with \$340 million for the current fiscal year ending September 30, 2007.

Second, in his FY 2008 budget, the President has proposed almost \$380 million for NARA, an increase of nearly 12 percent over this year's appropriated level.

These additional funds are needed in part to meet increases in operating costs for our facilities nationwide.

Operating expenses include soaring costs for energy and security services, higher rents for our facilities nationwide, and staff pay raises—as well as accelerated efforts to make as many electronic and textual records available to the public as quickly as possible.

It is clear, however, that this year's budget and next year's proposed budget—though sensitive to NARA's goals and priorities—remain tight and austere, and similar budgets can be expected for several more years. Every day we face the challenge of doing as much as we can, as well as we can, with limited resources.

As NARA confronts these austere budgets, the agency has already sought to trim operating costs with a hiring freeze (now ended); by reducing the hours of operation in the research rooms; and by generally tightening purse strings in each unit of the agency nationwide. We continue to seek ways to cut expenses at NARA.

Some new facilities joining NARA will also need operating support.

The President has requested funds to continue preparations for the George W. Bush Presidential Library. We must begin staffing so arrangements can be made for NARA to take custody of Presidential and Vice Presidential records on January 20, 2009.

The President is also seeking operating funds for the Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library. Later this year, we expect to accept the privately run Nixon facility into our system of Presidential libraries. We need now to begin staffing in Yorba Linda, CA, with Federal employees and



to prepare for the eventual transfer of Nixon records from College Park to California. A NARA-run Nixon Library will bring together records from throughout the former President's career and complete the library system from Herbert Hoover to the incumbent.

For the Electronic Records Archives (ERA), the President is proposing \$58 million, an increase of \$12.8 million over the FY 2007 appropriation.

This higher funding level for ERA will allow us to maintain progress on the first increment of ERA, scheduled to begin this fall. The increased funding will also help us ensure that ERA is ready to receive the electronic records of the Bush Administration when President Bush leaves office early in 2009.

On that day, ERA will have the capability to ingest and store both classified and unclassified records from the Bush Administration in an appropriate and secure environment and provide search and retrieval capabilities in response to special access requests.

The President's FY 2008 request also calls for additional resources for NARA's Inspector General to perform oversight for, among other areas, development of ERA.

Missing from the FY 2008 proposal is funding for grants and staff support for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), NARA's grant-making arm.

For repairs and restoration to facilities owned by NARA, such as the National Archives at College Park, the National Archives Building in downtown Washington, and the Presidential libraries, the President's FY 2008 budget requests \$8.6 million.

The increases proposed by the President, I believe, will provide resources allowing us to continue programs aimed at meeting many of our strategic

goals as the nation's record keeper.

The confidence that Congress and the Administration have shown in us is a response to the highly professional work you do every day at our locations around the country.

I take pride in leading an organization that delivers its products and services to the American people in a timely, competent, and courteous manner.

However, as I have said before in this space, it remains vital for us to convey to Congress and the Administration the *urgency* of NARA's important mission. Our nation's records guarantee citizens' rights, preserve our history, and hold government accountable.

The archiving of these records—and the widest possible access to them—are central to the survival of our democracy.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Weinstein". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ALLEN WEINSTEIN
Archivist of the United States

*This column originally appeared
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