

Tight FY 06 budget is a wake-up call

I am pleased to report that the Congress has passed and President Bush has signed legislation providing a fiscal year 2006 budget of \$338,141,000 for NARA. The FY 2006 funding is \$15,070,000 more than the President's request for NARA for this year and nearly \$20,000,000 greater than last year's appropriation of \$318,720,672.

We are grateful to the Congress for funding fully the President's request for NARA for 2006, and we will do our utmost to spend each penny given to us carefully and responsibly.

However, while the appropriations will provide us with an increase in funding, a pleasant surprise in the current fiscal environment, it is still a tight budget.

We will have to absorb many of our operating cost increases—such as increased rent, utility, and security costs—at the expense of other activities. And while the appropriations legislation also authorizes a 3.1 percent pay raise for civilian employees, it does not include any additional funds for it. Moreover, congressional leaders are still discussing an across-the-board cut for all departments and agencies for FY 2006 that would be included in another spending bill.

First, the details.

For the Electronic Records Archives (ERA), Congress provided \$37,914,000 in the final FY 2006 budget, of which \$22,000,000 will be available through FY 2008. This funding level will allow continued development of ERA and lay the groundwork for building the entire system.

The ERA funding also includes \$2,000,000 for NARA to begin working with the Naval Oceanographic Office at the National Center for Critical Information Processing and Storage (NCCIPS) at the Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. NARA will work with the NCCIPS to locate a component of the distributed ERA system there. NARA will locate mirror systems at geographically distant sites to ensure continuing operations in case of local problems or even disasters.

For repairs and renovations at the 15 facilities NARA owns, the FY 2006 appropriations includes \$9,682,000. This represents NARA's required base for normal repairs and renovations plus \$1,500,000 to contribute to the construction of a new regional archives and records facility in Anchorage, Alaska; \$1,000,000 for repair of



the plaza at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library in Austin, Texas; and \$1,000,000 for the design of the renovation and expansion of the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston.

The National Historical Publica-

tions and Records Commission (NHPRC) will receive \$7,500,000 for FY 2006. Of that amount, \$2,000,000 will be for administrative and operating costs, leaving \$5,500,000 for grants.

We are especially pleased that NHPRC received adequate funding to continue its grant program. The commission fills a vital role in making grants to preserve non-Federal historical records that are important to the American story. Just recently, NHPRC provided grants to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas to help in recovering and preserving records damaged by the recent hurricanes.

For the Archives' operating expenses, \$283,045,000 was provided. Of that amount, \$2,000,000 is earmarked for the initial move of records, staffing, and operations of the Nixon Presidential Library, which is scheduled to become part of NARA in 2006. The private Nixon Library in Yorba Linda, California, is now being retrofitted to meet NARA standards in preparation for its conversion into a Federally operated and staffed facility.

Among other items included in the operating expenses account are:

- \$11,261,000 to cover must-fund base increases such as the pay raise, facility and information technology rate changes, utility and guard increases, and financial management service support.

- \$3,353,000 to replace the 11-year-old security system for Archives II. The new system will use smart chip technology to meet mandated Federal guidelines and standards.

- \$1,076,000 to develop an agency-wide Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) required of all Federal agencies. The resources will be used to prepare capability assessments for NARA locations and establish alternate sites for NARA headquarters and the Office of the Federal Register. The *Federal Register* is

required to publish emergency regulations regardless of circumstances to ensure the Government's continued operations.

- \$100,000 to expand the investigative capacity of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). These resources will enable the OIG to hire an additional investigator to assist in researching and retrieving missing or stolen NARA documents.

This budget should be a wake-up call for NARA. It means that for the coming year and into the future, we must work harder to seek and to justify the resources adequate to carry out our legal duty as the nation's recordkeeper.

We are, in a real sense, a "national security agency" in that we are the steward of the records of our nation that document the rights of Americans, the actions of Federal officials, and the national experience. As such, we *must* convey to the administration and Congress a sense of urgency about the importance of our mission. And we *must* persuade them to provide the resources necessary both to eliminate our massive backlog of unprocessed traditional paper records and to preserve and make accessible through the ERA the Government's electronic records of today and tomorrow.

Working with our stakeholder and customer groups, I'm confident we will meet these challenges in the months and years ahead.

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

ALLEN WEINSTEIN
Archivist of the United States

*This column originally appeared
in the December 2005 issue
of the NARA Staff Bulletin.*