

An austere budget proposal—and a challenge

President Bush has sent to Congress a proposed fiscal year 2007 budget that seeks \$338,054,000 for NARA, an increase of \$12,519,000 over NARA's FY 2006 appropriation of \$325,535,000.

This budget request—an austere proposal for tight fiscal times—will provide necessary funding for the National Archives to make continued progress on meeting most of the goals in our Strategic Plan and to fulfill our role as the nation's recordkeeper.

However, as I mentioned a few months ago when we received the current budget, we need to work harder to seek—and to justify—the resources required to fulfill our mission, and in doing so, we *must* convey a sense of urgency about the importance of NARA's mission as the nation's recordkeeper.

This urgency is underscored by examining the elements of the budget request. While the overall amount in the President's FY 2007 request is greater than that with which we are now operating, increases in operating costs will more than absorb the proposed increase.

For example, for NARA's overall operating expenses, the President proposes \$289,605,000, an increase of more than \$7,000,000 over this year's budget. However, this additional money is needed to fund staff pay raises and increases in the costs of rental space, energy, and security measures.

The Electronic Records Archives (ERA), a key NARA strategic goal aimed at providing a means to preserve and make accessible electronic records far into the future, is funded in the FY 2007 request at \$45,455,000, which is \$7,920,000 over the FY 2006 appropriated level. More is needed, but this higher funding level will allow NARA to build the first increment of ERA and to ingest in their original formats a number of very important electronic records. Long-term preservation and access issues will be addressed in subsequent versions of ERA.

As you all know, the importance of ERA and the technology it is expected to create is enormous—both to government and private institutions. Without ERA and its technology, many electronic records could be lost forever.

On another front, the President's FY 2007 budget request provides no funding for grants and staff support for the National Historical Publications and Records



Commission (NHPRC), our grantmaking arm. Over the past four decades, NHPRC has awarded \$168 million to 4,200 projects involving state and local government archives, colleges and universities, and individuals in

efforts to preserve and publish important non-Federal historical records that document American history. And last year, NHPRC provided grants to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas to help in recovering and preserving records damaged by the Gulf Coast hurricanes

Those familiar with NHPRC's work, among them this Archivist, believe it is important that the Commission receive adequate funding. An NHPRC grant can have a profound impact on the preservation of important historical records that is far beyond its modest cost.

The FY 2007 budget request also includes funds for bringing two more Presidential libraries into the NARA system.

The President has requested \$3,692,000 for the staffing, operation, and maintenance in FY 2007 of the private Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, CA, scheduled to be transferred to NARA later this year. In 2004, Congress changed the law governing Richard M. Nixon's Presidential records to allow them to be moved to a NARA facility outside the Washington, DC, area.

The foundation that operates the private Nixon Library is now retrofitting its facility to meet NARA requirements, and that work is expected to be completed this year. Once NARA determines that the facility meets prescribed standards, we will send Congress a proposal for its acceptance by the Government.

The President is also asking Congress for close to \$7,000,000 toward construction of an archival storage addition to the Nixon facility that will house the Nixon records now at Archives II. Those records will be transferred to Yorba Linda in stages through 2010.

The proposed budget also seeks \$485,000 to begin preparations for the George W.

Bush Presidential Library. The funds will be used to hire and train four archivists and a museum registrar who will be involved in the transfer of records and artifacts from the Bush administration.

To relocate the regional archives operations of the Central Plains Region in Kansas City and the Southwest Region in Fort Worth, the budget provides \$4,000,000. Our leases on these substandard facilities have been terminated, and we need to move the records to a new location.

For repairs and restoration to facilities owned by NARA, the President's budget includes a base level of \$6,120,180.

In addition, \$655,000 of the operating funds will go to support the Public Interest Declassification Board. This board was originally authorized by Congress in 2001 to serve as an advisory body to the President and the executive branch in matters regarding declassification of Federal records. It is now authorized through 2008, and the Information Security Oversight Office is serving as its executive secretariat.

In the coming months, as we work with our stakeholder and customer groups to secure the resources NARA needs to do its job properly, we know that NARA's greatest asset—a world-class staff—is hard at work on our many challenges.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Weinstein". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Allen" on top and "Weinstein" below it.

ALLEN WEINSTEIN
Archivist of the United States

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