

ORAL STATEMENT

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Census, and National Archives

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Thank you, Chairman Clay and members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to participate in this hearing on the reauthorization of funding for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

I have been the Executive Director of the Commission since April 2008, and prior to that, I served as Deputy Executive Director for 4 years.

During this time, I have had the privilege of overseeing a Federal grant-making agency that plays a unique and valuable role in helping Americans access their historical records and that leverages its resources to maximum

advantage. Grantees each year develop and implement dozens of projects to publish, preserve, and make known the nation's most important collections of archives and personal papers to scholars, researchers, teachers, and ordinary citizens in every corner of America.

Since 1964, the Commission has funded approximately 4,800 projects across the country. These projects, in turn, have laid the groundwork for countless venues that increase our understanding of the American Story and reach millions of Americans, including:

Classroom use of historical documents in schools

Public exhibitions at historical societies and museums

Prize-winning biographies of the Founding Fathers and other notable Americans

Television series on the Civil War, John Adams, and numerous other topics

And new digitized collections that document such varied subjects as the history of the Florida Everglades and the work of noted conservationist Aldo Leopold.

Through our grants programs, we are able to leverage funds from private and public resources to augment the Federal dollars we invest. In addition, the majority of Commission grants support jobs that move these projects forward. In the panels this afternoon, you will learn about the work of historians, documentary editors, and archivists and the catalytic role the Commission plays in advancing that work for public benefit. You will learn about the thousands of repositories across the country that struggle with caring for and providing access to the nation's historical records.

Over the next five years, the Commission seeks to address several critical needs through its programs:

First, one of the NHPRC's cornerstone grants programs is in Publishing Historical Records which supports projects that transcribe, annotate and publish the historical records that document the American story including

the Founding Era, the modern Presidency, the Civil Rights Movement, and more. To date, we have supported some 300 projects, a body of work that tells the nation's remarkable history in the words of those who made that history. In the Internet Age, digital editions have become vital tools for both preserving and making accessible primary source materials. In the years ahead, we should ensure historians and editors the opportunity to creatively adapt to the advantages of online publishing.

Secondly, the archives field must address several challenges in dealing with the tremendous backlog of unprocessed records and providing online access to collections. Over the past few years, the NHPRC has spearheaded new grant opportunities implementing approaches to archival work that address the "hidden" collections of historical documents, to eliminate backlogs and rapidly get these historical collections known and available to the public. We also are funding projects to digitize entire collections of historical records and put them online, using cost effective methods and a streamlined approach. Institutions ranging from Princeton to the Denver Public Library are rapidly changing their approaches to

archival cataloging and preservation, and providing online access to substantial collections through NHPRC grants.

Thirdly, at present, the NHPRC supports state historical records advisory boards with grants to develop statewide services and training in archives, as well as offering effective regrant programs. The vast majority of state boards actively partner with the Commission in these vital efforts. In Missouri, for example, our partnership with the state board recently helped support a regrant program for 14 projects across the state, including the archives of Historic Boonville, the Jewish Federation of St. Louis, and the architectural archives at the St. Joseph Museums. The Commission stands ready to do more of this kind of work to strengthen historical records preservation and use at the local level.

And finally, we are eager to develop a targeted grants program that focuses on improving access to the nation's records of servitude and emancipation. These documents are often extremely difficult to find and use, but they are critical resources for anyone doing genealogical and other historical research.

The National Archives serves as a hub for the nation's archives, and the NHPRC is a key part of that process. The Commission looks forward to serving as a true and effective Federal partner in preserving and facilitating access to the nation's historical records.

Thank you again for this opportunity to discuss the Commission with the Committee, and I look forward to answering your questions about the NHPRC and its work.