June xx, 2012

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson The Honorable Jim Moran

Chairman Ranking Member

House Appropriations Subcommittee on House Appropriations Subcommittee on

Interior, Environment & Related Agencies Interior, Environment & Related Agencies

B-308 Rayburn House Office Building 1016 Longworth House Office Building

Washington, DC  20515 Washington, DC  20515

Dear Chairman Simpson and Ranking Member Moran,

On behalf of the board of directors of the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the executive directors, volunteer board members, and supporters of the state and territorial councils across the country, we urge the Subcommittee to support FY 2014 funding of $154 million for the National Endowment for the Humanities and $44 million for the state humanities councils.

State humanities councils work in every congressional district, reaching millions of Americans through public programs shaped by communities themselves. Councils revitalize American communities, helping them understand, share, and celebrate their history and culture. **Councils strengthen local economies** by making communities more vibrant places to live, whichattracts new residents, businesses, investors, and a skilled, educated workforce. From oil fields in Wyoming and North Dakota to small towns in Idaho, Georgia, Kansas, and New England to immigrant communities in California and Florida, councils offer enriching cultural and educational experiences, supported by a modest but essential federal investment.

As full partners of the NEH, councils receive their core funding through the Federal/State Partnership line of the NEH budget and use that funding to leverage additional support from foundations, corporations, private individuals, and state governments. In 2012, councils **leveraged $4.00 for every federal dollar** they awarded in grants to local institutions. To stretch resources and strengthen the cultural and educational networks in the **6,000 communities** they served in 2012, councils worked with more than **10,000 partners**—libraries and museum, social service agencies, chambers of commerce, medical institutions, religious groups, community colleges, and many others.

Since FY 2010, NEH funding for the state councils has been cut by nearly 19%, a loss of about $8.85 million or an average of $158,000 per council. Reduced federal funding has led to fewer dollars leveraged and therefore even less funding for local organizations and communities. For example, the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities had to slash their grants to community organizations from $300,000 in FY 2009 to $110,000 in FY 2012, a 63% decrease.

Council programs change lives for hundreds of thousands of citizens in their states. The following are just a sampling of the groups that benefit from these programs.

* **Children increase their chances of success in school through family literacy programs**. Humanities Washington, for example, works with educators and libraries to offer the Prime Time Family Reading curriculum, which guides families through the cultural and ethical themes presented in children’s literature. In 2013, the council will offer Prime Time to families in Port Townsend, Spokane, the Tri-Cities and Walla Walla.
* **Teachers gain knowledge and renewed enthusiasm for their profession through council-supported summer institutes**. The Idaho Humanities Councilhas provided inspiration for countless teachers through its annual teacher institutes, which this summer will focus on Idaho territorial history.
* **Young people become excited about books and ideas**. The New York Council for the Humanities, through their “Together: Book Talk for Kids and Parents” program, offers parents and their 9-11-year-old children a rare opportunity to talk about books and ideas.
* **Veterans work their way back from confusion and even despair to re-find their place in the civilian world through council programs.** The Missouri Humanities Council “Missouri Warrior Writers Program,” launched in partnership with the Missouri Writers Guild and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, offers returning veterans a path of recovery from the traumas of war through creative expression. The Maine Humanities Council has adapted its “Literature and Medicine” program for medical personnel working with returning veterans.
* **Immigrants improve their English, their employability, and their sense of belonging through humanities council programs**. The New Hampshire Humanities Council’s program “Connections” uses children’s literature and trained facilitators to promote English language skills and nurture conversation in which readers contribute their own ideas and stories. The Minnesota council has co-created culturally relevant children’s books to foster English literacy skills among Asian Pacific Islanders. Cal Humanities’ “Searching for Democracy” initiative has provided support for many of the state’s immigrant groups to record their stories.
* **Residents of rural communities reap the benefits of lifelong learning by taking part in council programs—often the only cultural opportunities in their area**. The Museum on Main Street program, offered through a partnership with the Smithsonian, features a touring exhibit as a focal point for community collaborations that build community pride and increase economic activity. Last year in Waynoka, Oklahoma, for example, the local historical society museum hosting the exhibit realized a 100% increase in attendance during the six-week tour, as well as a 200% increase in gift store purchases and a 400% increase in donations.

**Councils build a sense of community and civic pride**. Council programs help citizens come together to think and talk about the issues of greatest importance to them. They provide resources that allow citizens to put their own concerns into a larger perspective, understand the history of their community and state, and shape a more promising future. For example, the Georgia Humanities Council’s “From Civil War to Civil Rights” initiative has led the state’s citizens in considering questions related to race, rights, responsibilities, and what it means to be an American. In Warren, Ohio, the council strengthened the community by bringing together the public library, the local newspaper, and a community development organization to establish the town as a permanent residence for the Ohio Chautauqua summer program.

The $44 million we are asking the subcommittee to provide to councils is the best investment you can possibly make in strengthening the nation’s communities. These funds will enable councils to build a richer civic life and a more civil, thoughtful, enlightened, and active citizenry.

Respectfully,

John Roth, Chair Esther Mackintosh, President