Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 19, 2005

The Honorable Charles Taylor
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Taylor and Ranking Member Dicks:

We understand that the constraints of the budget this year have never been greater and that your Subcommittee faces unusually difficult choices in crafting its FY 2006 bill. It is in this context that we are writing to request increased funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

While we are pleased that the President's budget request contains funding for the NEH We the People program, we are disappointed that the administration has recommended flat funding for this initiative and for the NEH core programs at the FY 2005 level of $138.1 million. Level funding will not allow the agency to maintain the current reach of its programs. We respectfully request that the Subcommittee provide a $15 million (10 percent) increase for the NEH in FY 2006, bringing the total funding level to $153.1 million. The proposed increase would provide additional support for the We the People initiative and the NEH core program offices.

The National Endowment for the Humanities provides critical leadership in encouraging excellence in scholarly research, education, and public programming, and in preserving and providing access to our nation's cultural and intellectual heritage.

We the People is a multi-faceted, agency-wide program focused on examining significant events and themes in our nation's history. The initiative is designed to expand awareness and knowledge of the traditions and values that have formed our nation, and to enhance appreciation of our civic institutions. The Administration initially proposed a budget of $100 million over three years for the initiative. Although we will soon be entering the third year of the program, Congress has so far appropriated only $21 million. Additional funding for We the People in FY 2006 would support teacher seminars and institutes with new content focusing on American history and civics; media projects focusing on key people and events in American history; and preservation projects that save and provide access to important historical documents and artifacts central to America's historic and cultural heritage.

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The core programs of the NEH serve as the backbone of federal involvement in the humanities. Unfortunately, in recent years, funding for the NEH core programs has declined in real terms. An increase in FY 2006 will sustain the long term grant-making abilities of the agency in the areas of scholarly research, education, preservation and access, public programs, and state humanities councils. Funding increases for the NEH core programs are essential to conserve and nurture America's heritage, bring the humanities to the community, and educate the next generation of Americans.

We realize that both of you have personally worked to ensure continued funding of the NEH. We appreciate your attention to this matter, and urge you to support an increase in FY 2006 for the NEH.

Sincerely,

DAVID PRICE

JIM LEACH

LOUISE SLAUGHTER

NEIL ABERCROMBIE

GARY ACKERMAN

TOM ALLEN

TAMMY BALDWIN

HOWARD BERMAN

DAN BOREN

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