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Testimony to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies on the President's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

The National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (NATHPO) is pleased to submit testimony for the record to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies on the President's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Request.

The National Association of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers

NATHPO is a national not-for-profit membership association of tribal governments that are committed to preserving, rejuvenating, and improving the status of tribal cultures and cultural practices by supporting Native languages, arts, dances, music, oral traditions, cultural properties, tribal museums and cultural centers, and tribal libraries. NATHPO assists tribal communities protect their cultural properties, whether they are naturally occurring in the landscape or are manmade structures. In addition to members who serve as the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) for their respective tribe, our membership includes many other tribal government officials who support our mission and goals. NATHPO provides technical assistance, training, timely information, original research, and convenes a national meeting of tribal representatives, preservation experts, and federal agency officials.

Priority Area – Institute of Museum and Library Services:

- A. Institute of Museum and Library Services
 - i. Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program*
 - ii. Native American Library Services: Basic Grants*
 - ii. Native American Library Services: Enhancement Grants*
- B. National Endowment for the Arts; National Endowment for the Humanities

A. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

i. The Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program

On September 24, 2003, President Bush signed Public Law 108-81, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Reauthorization Act, which contains a set-aside of 1.75% of all amounts appropriated to museums under the IMLS Act through Fiscal Year 2009 for the tribal museum grant program (Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services). The authorization provides for up to \$675,500 annually through Fiscal Year 2009 for a tribal museum grant program, or up to \$3.3 million total over the life of the authorization. The funding

i. The Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program, continued

can be used for “grants, contracts, or cooperative agreements” between IMLS and Indian tribes. To date, IMLS has awarded about \$4.8 million over five years to Native museums located throughout the country through a competitive grant program. Unfortunately, tribal interest in museums and cultural centers exceeds the current levels of support. With additional funds, more tribal cultural institutions would be able to receive larger grant amounts, thus serving a large, unmet need in Indian country.

Recommendations – Budgetary:

Increase the set-aside for the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services grant program from 1.75% of the total Museum line item to 3.5% without any accompanying language that would cap the program.

ii. The Native American Library Services: Basic Grants

Under this grant program, federal funds are distributed in equal amounts among eligible applicants in a non-competitive process. The IMLS increased the Basic grant to \$6,000/Indian tribe per year and is available to support existing library operations and to maintain core library services. The Education/Assessment Option is \$1,000/Indian tribe per year and is supplemental to the Basic grant; it is also noncompetitive and must be requested. The purpose of the Education/Assessment Option is to provide funding for library staff to attend continuing education courses and training workshops on- or off-site, for library staff to attend or give presentations at conferences related to library services, and to hire a consultant for an on-site professional library assessment. Currently, one about one-third of the nation’s 562 Indian tribes are participating in the Basic grants to libraries. The number of participating tribes dropped this past year as tribes were required to apply online using the www.grants.gov process. Related to the Basic grant program is the Enhancement program (described below), which is funded with the excess funds after the Basic grants have been awarded.

Recommendations – Budgetary:

1. The overall funding level of the Basic grant program needs to be increased because if all eligible tribal libraries requested an IMLS Basic grant, there would be no funds left over for tribal Enhancement grants. Increase the set-aside for the Native American Library Services grant program from 1.75% to 3.5% [of the overall Library funds] without any accompanying language that would cap the program.
2. Increase the individual Basic grant award to \$7,000/per Indian tribe per year.
3. Increase the Education/Assessment Option to \$3,000/per Indian tribe per year.

iii. Native American Library Services: Enhancement Grants

Funds for the tribal Enhancement grants support projects to advance the applicant's existing library services or implement new library services, particularly as they relate to the goals of the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). These competitive grants are intended to encourage the implementation of both mainstream and innovative library practices and under the current guidance and funding, only 13-15 tribal libraries are supported each year.

Recommendations – Budgetary:

Increase of the Basic library grants to American Indian/Native Hawaiian set-aside to 3.5%, so that funds are available for the Enhancement grant program, with an anticipated increase of tribal and village requests for Basic Grant and Educational Option funds.

iv. Directorate of the IMLS

Another identified issue is the need for a funded and prolonged effort to recruit and train staff to work in tribal libraries, archives, and museums. Recruiting and supporting Native people in these fields has been slow and needs a influx of attention and resources to make viable career options. Most Native communities are geographically challenged and are located in isolated communities, usually lacking access to the most current technology and infrastructure. Unfortunately, most of these communities do not offer the necessary education in library services and technology and museology. In the worldwide push to conduct work online, Indian country is being left behind in the technology age due to the lack of skilled workforce and lack of infrastructure in this important field (archives, libraries, and museums are an important component of records management in Indian country).

Recommendations – Administrative:

Create a Master of Library and Information Sciences (MLIS) service program, whereas an institution of higher education may offer financial assistance to Native students to assist with their educational costs and in return, the student will commit to working in a tribal library for three years after they receive their degree.

Recommendations – Budgetary:

Create a matching grant program where the Tribe and IMLS each support the salary of new Native American MLIS graduates, to work in the tribal library for three years after they've earned their degree through a pilot program supporting their educational costs.

B. National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

Both the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) have exciting and positive programs, yet the challenge continues as to how Indian country participates and how traditional crafts, folklore-related activities, and tribal conservation efforts fit it to the existing grant programs. For example, NATHPO was able to write a successful grant application in the **Access to Artistic Excellence** program thus allowing NATHPO an opportunity to convene tribal museum directors for a weeklong seminar, but this program's availability is not widely known in Indian country. It is our understanding that there are many additional programs that may serve Indian country, but which rarely receive tribal applications. (Access to Artistic Excellence supports the creation and presentation of work in the disciplines of dance, design, folk and traditional arts, literature, media arts, museums, music, musical theater, presenting, theater, and visual arts and can include commissions, residencies, workshops, performances, exhibitions, publications, festivals, and professional development programs.)

Recommendations – Administrative:

The NEA and NEH host a national meeting with Indian country to discuss grant programs to which Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations may participate. As part of this national meeting, challenges and barriers shall be identified by both the attendees and hosts so that in the future, Indian country may fully participate in the wide range of cultural activities the federal government supports and promotes. Discussion to include how NEA and NEH support Native language preservation and rejuvenation.