



December 28, 2017

**To:** NCH Policy Board  
**From:** Lee White, Executive Director  
**Subject:** NCH 2017 Annual Report

This report details the National Coalition for History's accomplishments in 2017. It has been an extremely successful and productive year for the coalition, despite internal financial challenges. NCH continues its transformation into a truly national organization seeking the broadest possible influence in supporting historians and our other constituencies.

## **1. FY17 and FY18 Federal Funding**

### **Outcome: Completed/Ongoing**

**NCH's primary advocacy focus remains ensuring sustained and robust funding for those federal agencies and programs that have the greatest impact on historians and other stakeholders.**

In 2017, programs of interest to our constituents faced unprecedented attacks from the Trump administration. On May 23, the president sent his proposed fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget request to Congress. As expected, it included devastating cuts to federal history and humanities funding including elimination of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and K-12 history and civics grants and Title VI/Fulbright-Hays international education programs at the Department of Education. While Congress has not yet passed a final FY18 federal budget, appropriations bills that have cleared the House and Senate committees overwhelmingly reject the scorched earth policies of the administration with regard to history.

### **A. FY17 Appropriations**

#### **Outcome: Completed**

The congressional appropriations process was more dysfunctional than ever in 2017. In December 2016, the 114th Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR) to keep the federal government funded at FY16 levels until spring, after the seating of the 115th Congress and inauguration of President Trump.

On May 4, 2017, Congress finally approved a \$1.1 trillion omnibus appropriations bill that funded the federal government for the remaining five months of FY17. Across the board, history,

archival and education programs were either level funded or received small increases. This should be considered a major victory given the current budget climate. Final FY17 funding levels for history-related agencies and programs can be found in the appendix to this report.

## **B. FY18 Appropriations Status**

### **Outcome: Ongoing**

While the new fiscal year began on October 1, the outlook for FY18 funding remains murky. Before leaving for the holidays, Congress voted to delay their day of reckoning with the budget until January 19, 2018. In the interim, programs remain funded at the FY17 level.

On September 14, the House narrowly passed a \$1.23 trillion omnibus FY18 funding bill that packaged together all twelve of the appropriations bills the body had already passed individually.

The Senate has not brought any appropriations bills to the floor. Thus far the Senate Appropriations Committee has only passed the Legislative Branch and Labor, HHS and Education funding bills. The Committee has also released several additional draft funding bills, including those covering the National Archives, NHPRC, NEH, Smithsonian Institution, and National Park Service. The outlook is promising for those agencies. None would receive more than minor cuts in the Senate bills, and a few would even gain funding.

A chart comparing House and Senate FY18 appropriations bills, the administration's FY18 budget request and funding levels from FY17 is attached as an appendix to this report.

**The most important takeaway is that in the House and Senate appropriations bills still in play, the three agencies of concern to our interests that were slated for elimination by the Trump administration (NEH, IMLS and the NHPRC) were, for the most part, level funded. In addition, funding was provided for K-12 history and civics programs at the Department of Education.**

## **C. Title VI/Fulbright-Hays International Education Programs**

### **Outcome: Completed/Ongoing**

NCH recently signed on to a letter seeking reauthorization of both programs as part of a larger bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA). NCH has also issued alerts in support of funding in FY18 for the two programs.

## **2. Support for K-12 History/Civics Education Grants at the Department of Education**

### **Outcome: Completed/Ongoing**

In October, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos proposed a list of supplemental priorities and definitions to be used in awarding discretionary (competitive) grants made by the Department, including ones for K-12 history and civics education. While the proposal recommended a greater emphasis on civics education, it unfortunately did not prioritize history as well.

On October 23, NCH submitted comments to the Department requesting history be included along with civics education in prioritizing how limited grant funds are awarded. NCH made the case that history complements civics education in creating engaged citizens and leaving it out makes it more difficult to achieve the stated goals of the proposal. The priority list also cites the need for “employability skills (such as critical thinking, interpersonal skills and organizational skills).” NCH pointed out that historical thinking requires the development by students of the ability to collect, organize, analyze, contextualize, and synthesize data into cogent positions that are supportable by evidence.

### **3. NCH Advocacy on Taxation Issues**

#### **Outcome: Completed**

NCH was involved in two advocacy efforts during consideration of the recently-passed tax law.

- A. **Federal Historic Tax Credit:** The tax credit is a widely used redevelopment tool for abandoned and underutilized historic properties. The House bill eliminated the credit. The Senate version kept the historic tax credit at 20%, but requires it be taken over five years instead of all at once as currently. Partnering with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, NCH issued an alert to our members urging them to support the Senate position, which was included in the enacted version.
- B. **Graduate Student Tuition Waivers Treated as Taxable Income**—The House bill would have taxed tuition waivers, which are used by graduate students serving as teaching assistants or research assistants. This provision was not in the Senate bill. NCH joined in a successful advocacy effort, in collaboration with the National Humanities Alliance, ensuring the Senate position prevailed.

### **4. Elimination of Saturday Research Hours at DC-Area National Archives Facilities**

#### **Outcome: Completed**

On July 12, NCH sent a letter to Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero opposing the elimination of Saturday research hours at the main Archives building in Washington and Archives II in College Park, Maryland beginning July 22. NARA at the same time announced it was extending weekday research hours by one hour at the two facilities (8:45 a.m.–5:45 p.m.) and adding an additional pull time. NARA announced the changes via social media without consulting, or prior notice to, the researcher community.

NCH’s letter asserted that extending weekday hours did not make up for the elimination of a

weekend day. One of NARA's rationales for eliminating Saturday hours was that usage had been declining over recent years. While that may be the case, the historians, researchers, students, genealogists and the general public who availed themselves of those hours likely did so because they were juggling other commitments such as a full-time job, school or family. NCH argued one of the unintended consequences of the change would be a disproportionate impact on those without the ability or resources to devote themselves to full-time research.

## **5. NCH Involvement in Effort to Plan the Nation's 250th Anniversary Celebration**

### **Outcome: Ongoing**

In July 2016, Congress passed legislation (Public Law 114-196) establishing the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission to begin planning for the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026. The 33-member body is comprised of 8 Members of Congress, 16 private citizens, and 9 federal officials. One academic historian and two political scientists are included among the private citizen appointees. The Commission is tasked with developing a report with recommendations to the president and Congress by the summer of 2018.

The Department of the Interior recently issued a request for proposals seeking a nonprofit partner to serve as secretariat and administrator of the Commission. The nonprofit partner will raise funds, prepare reports, provide administrative and financial support, and house the Commission's administrative offices. NCH has been closely monitoring the situation and is poised to play an active role in 2018 as a resource to the Commission.

## **6. Congressional History Caucus**

### **Outcome: Ongoing**

We currently have 25 members in the House caucus. There was an unavoidable delay this year in reactivating the caucus in the new Congress due to staff changes in the offices of the co-chairs. However, the recruiting effort is underway again and will continue to remain a priority in 2018.

Our website includes a "how-to" page to allow NCH organizations and their members to recruit Members of Congress for the caucus. We continued to promote the "Dear Colleague" letter urging representatives to join the caucus. More information on the History Caucus can be found at <http://historycoalition.org/congressional-history-caucus>.

## **7. Opposition to Proposed Entrance Fees Increase at National Parks**

### **Outcome: Completed**

In December, NCH sent a letter to the Department of the Interior opposing proposed major fee increases at seventeen National Park Service sites. NCH argued raising fees would put these parks out of financial reach for many low and middle income families. These national parks are

indispensable for history education, a subject in which American students are already struggling. Access to our shared heritage, whether natural or historical, should not be contingent upon a person's ability to pay exorbitant fees.

## **8. Increased Public Access to Congressional Reports**

### **Outcome: Ongoing**

NCH joined 37 other open government and accountability groups in supporting HR 4631, the "Access to Congressionally Mandated Reports Act (ACMRA)." The ACMRA requires the Government Publishing Office (GPO) to establish and maintain a publicly available website containing copies of all congressionally mandated reports prepared by federal agencies.

NCH has also endorsed the "Equal Access to Congressional Research Service Reports Act of 2017" (HR 2335). This bill directs the GPO to establish, maintain, and ensure the automatic updating of a public website containing Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports, and an index, that is searchable, sortable, and downloadable (including in bulk), for which no fee may be charged. Currently CRS reports are not easily accessible to the public.

## **9. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Reauthorization Bill**

### **Outcome: Ongoing**

NCH has been working with the American Association for State and Local History and the American Alliance for Museums in developing legislation to reauthorize the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) introduced the bill (S 2271) right before the holiday recess. The IMLS is the primary federal agency that funds museum programs across the country. The legislation contains a number of provisions specifically designed to strengthen the museum field. Advocating for passage of this bill will be a priority for NCH in 2018.

## **10. NCH will continue to provide advice to, and monitor the activities of, the State Department Historical Advisory Committee, the NHPRC, the Public Interest Declassification Board (PIDB), the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress and other relevant federal bodies.**

### **Outcome: Ongoing**

## **11. Working with other stakeholders, NCH will monitor the Trump administration's approach to open government activities.**

### **Outcome: Ongoing**

NCH will continue to work towards identifying new areas in which to promote openness and transparency within the federal government while remaining vigilant for any attempts by the

Trump administration to undo the progress made in this area during the Obama administration. The executive director continued to follow the lead of OpenTheGovernment.org, the National Security Archive and other pro-transparency groups in lobbying on these issues.

**12. The Executive Director should make it a top priority to implement the *Membership and Marketing Plan*.**

**Outcome: Accomplished/Ongoing**

NCH dramatically expanded the frequency of communications with the full membership not just the policy board. Staff updated the infographic on the website to highlight NCH's achievements to existing members, and to solicit new and lapsed organizations to join the coalition. Staff also updated the website cover pages and included a new section with briefing papers on issues the coalition is following. A report detailing NCH's social media activities is attached as Appendix II to this report.

**Membership Breakdown:** NCH currently has 50 members, the same as 2016. National History Day asked for a one year moratorium on payment of their dues. Mt. Vernon has not submitted their dues contribution since a new president just took over and is assessing their continued membership. Both of these groups are included in the fifty.

- a) **Lead Organizations (>\$8,000):** There are currently four organizations in this group who contribute a total of \$126,000. This is a decrease of \$4,000 from FY16. A \$3,500 increase from the Organization of American Historians was offset by an unanticipated \$7,000 dues reduction from the Society for Military History (\$8,000 to \$1,000).
- b) **Sustaining Members (\$4,000--\$7,999):** There are currently eight organizations in this category that contribute a total of \$36,620. That is \$1,350 more than last year, due largely to a generous \$1,000 increase from the American Association for State and Local History.
- c) **Contributing Members (\$1,000--\$3,999):** There are currently 13 organizations in this category who contributed a total of \$16,000, down from \$17,730 from last year.
- d) **Basic Members (\$600):** There are 25 organizations in this category totaling \$11,010, essentially flat from last year. Of note: 14 groups ignored the Board's edict that they increase their annual minimum dues payment to \$600. Had everyone complied it would have resulted in \$3,990 in additional income, which would have halved our budget deficit of \$8,809.

**13. The Executive Director will set a goal of attending the annual meetings of three NCH organizations (within budget limitations) with priority given to those groups who meet the requisite membership level in the *Membership and Marketing Plan*.** The Executive Director will work with member organization leadership to facilitate presentations at their annual meetings. He only attended two annual meetings this year (AHA and OAH).

**Appendix I--FY18 Federal Funding for History, Archival and Education Programs**

**Note: Congress has yet to pass a final FY18 budget. These amounts reflect the funding status of bills at the furthest stage in the appropriations process in the House and Senate**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>House</b>	<b>Senate</b>
<b>National Archives (Operating Expenses)</b>	380.6	364.3	364.3	384.9
<b>National Historical Publications &amp; Records Commission</b>	6	0	4	6
<b>International Education &amp; Foreign Language Studies</b>	72	0	65	72
Title VI-A&B (Domestic Programs)	65	0	65	65
Fulbright-Hays (Overseas Programs)	7	0	0	7
<b>Dept. of Education History &amp; Civics Grants and Academies</b>	3.5	0	1.7	1.8
American History & Civics Academies	1.8	0	0	1.8
American History & Civics Grants	1.7	0	1.7	0
<b>National Endowment for the Humanities</b>	149.8	42.3	145	149.8
<b>Institute of Museum &amp; Library Services</b>	231	23	231	235
Library Programs	183.5	0	182.9	187.5
Museum Programs	31.7	0	31.1	31.7
<b>Smithsonian Institution</b>	863.3	947	885	878.4
Salaries & Expenses	729.4	719	716.6	729.4
Facilities Capital	134	228	168.5	149
<b>Wilson Center for International Scholars</b>	10.5	7	10	10.5
<b>National Park Service</b>				
Historic Preservation Fund	80.9	51	74.4	77.9
National Recreation and Preservation	62.6	37	59.6	63
Heritage Partnership Program	19.8	1	19.8	20.3
American Battlefield Protection Program	10	8.5	10	10
<b>Library of Congress</b>	632	688	648	688.8

**Amounts are in millions of \$**  
**Request= Trump FY18 proposed**

## **Appendix II—NCH Website Status Update (prepared by Callie Hopkins)**

**Note: Statistics are based on the period from 12/1/16 – 11/30/17 unless otherwise stated**

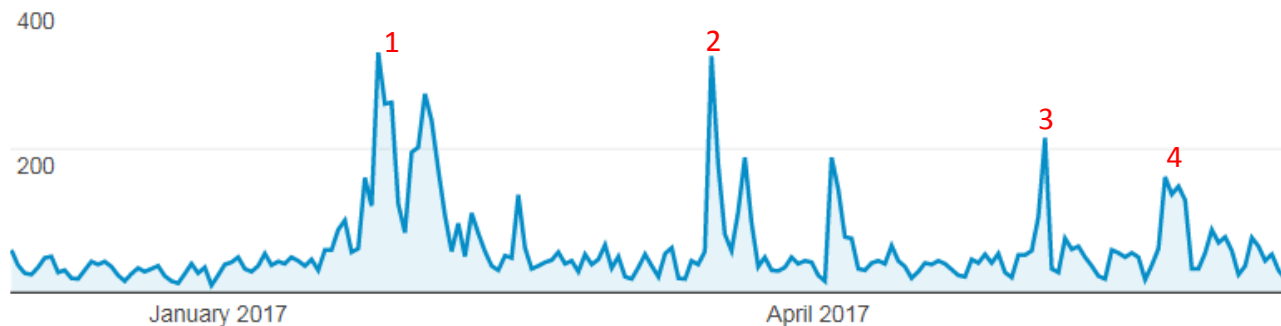
The following is an analysis of the National Coalition for History’s online presence, including our main website (historycoalition.org), social media, and monthly email newsletter. Data is drawn from Google Analytics and the built-in analytics reports on Facebook, Twitter, and Mail Chimp.

### **A. Overall Traffic**

**Sessions:** 56.49 per day on average (+33% over the same period in 2015-16)

A session is defined as a single user’s engagement with the website regardless of how long they spend or how many individual pages they visit.

Traffic relies most heavily on spikes from individual news stories. We had more of these spikes in 2017, not surprising given that it was the tumultuous first year of the Trump administration. Here are some of the news items that generated web traffic spikes in the first 6 months of the year:



1. Late January – Rule change exempting oral history from IRB review; appointment of new National Park Service Chief Historian
2. March 16<sup>th</sup> – Initial outline of President Trump’s FY2018 budget request to Congress
3. May 5<sup>th</sup> – Final passage of FY2017 budget
4. May 23-25<sup>th</sup> – Release of President Trump’s full FY2018 budget request to Congress

Of the top 10 most visited pages in the past year, five were recent news, two were old news stories from 2009 and 2011 that tied into recent events (one about President Obama’s first executive order, one about the NARA Nazi records database), and three were permanent pages (homepage, history caucus, and “who we are”).

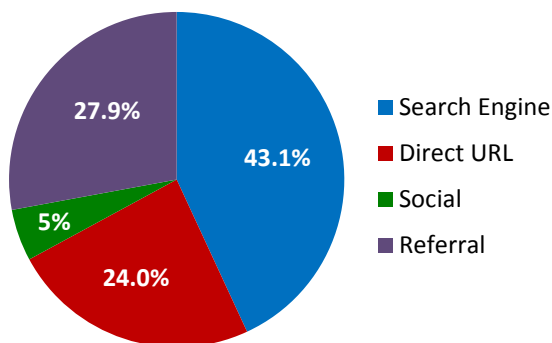
**Takeaway:** News stories are by far our biggest web traffic driver, much more so than any of our permanent content. If we want to increase our visibility and presence online, we should make an effort to post more often.



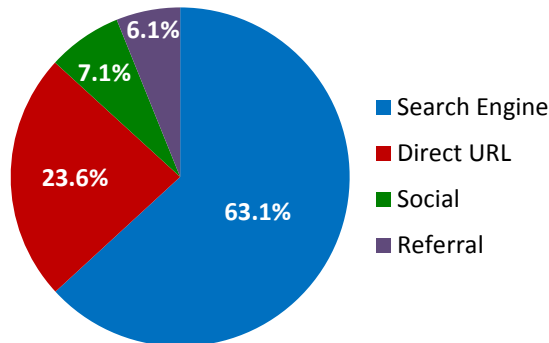
## B. Sources of Traffic

**Note: referral data is often skewed by bots and spam links, so those numbers should be considered a general guideline at best.**

**Dec 2, 2015 - Nov 30, 2016**



**Dec 2, 2015 - Nov 30, 2016**



Referrals, or direct links from other websites, represented only 6.1% of sessions this year, a significant drop from 27.9% over the same period last year.

Only 15 of our 50 member organizations list NCH on their own websites, including 9 of our 16 board members' organizations, which is well below what we expected. Surprisingly, NCH is not even listed on the advocacy pages of some members' websites. All of those that do list us include direct links, but most lack further details or even a logo, and often bury NCH on a hard-to-access page where few visitors are likely to see it. Two members even use an outdated H-Net link, which has not been our website since 2007.

Of those members that do link to NCH, the American Historical Association, National Council on Public History, American Association for State and Local History, Organization of American Historians, Society of American Archivists, and Oral History Association generated the most visits to our website this year. Non-members, including History News Network and The New York History Blog, also made the top 10 referral sites in the last year.

Traffic from social media increased from 5% of sessions last year to 7.1% of sessions this year. Twitter referrals grew faster than those from Facebook this year, and the two are now even in how much traffic they bring to our main website.

Most of our remaining traffic, more than 50%, now comes from visitors finding their way to us from a search engine like Google or Bing. Unfortunately, Google Analytics is unable to provide detailed information about what search terms bring people to our page. It does look like our website needs work to rank better in searches. For example, if you Google "history advocacy," the top results are OAH and AHA pages about NCH, and NCH's own website does not appear until the 5<sup>th</sup> page of results.

Our analytics are not currently set up to quantify how much traffic comes from our newsletters and other emails, but we will be integrating that data soon.

Web visitors also disproportionately come from here in Washington – 19.87% of sessions in the past year originated in the DC metro area.

**Takeaways:** Direct links from member organizations can be an effective driver of traffic, and we need our members to be more proactive in promoting the Coalition online. We can provide sample text, images, and other resources to facilitate this.

Since searches drive the bulk of our traffic, we should look into search engine optimization practices. This is another place where links come in. Search rankings are partly determined by the number of links from other websites, so our lack of representation on our members' websites has a detrimental impact on where we appear in search results.

We should also focus more on social media, especially Twitter, making an effort to post more often and more diverse content to keep followers engaged.

### C. Social Media/Newsletter Statistics (as of 12/1/17)

**Twitter followers:** 1,160

This year's top 3 tweets, in terms of both engagement and retweets, were:



**History Coalition** @HistCoalition · Jul 12

NCH sends letter to AOTUS opposing elimination of Saturday research hours at National Archives main facilities [historycoalition.org/wp-content/upl...](http://historycoalition.org/wp-content/upl...)



**History Coalition** @HistCoalition · Mar 13

@NationalHistory: "You can do anything once you major in the humanities" #HAD17



**History Coalition** @HistCoalition · Mar 9

Killing a Program That Brings History to Life--Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust on impact of eliminating the NEH [nyti.ms/2m5Dzt5](http://nyti.ms/2m5Dzt5)

**Facebook likes:** 1,360

Posts and page growth both slowed in the second half of this year.

12/1/16 – 5/30/17: 10 posts, 101 new followers

6/1/17 – 11/30/17: 5 posts, 31 new followers

It's hard to draw concrete conclusions from a small number of posts, but overall it looks like budget-related posts drew the most attention and engagement, with the appointment of the new NPS Chief Historian a close runner-up.

**Newsletter Subscribers: 527**

Average open rate: 55.51%

Average click rate: 13.37%

.EDU addresses: 144 (27.32%)

.GOV addresses: 63 (11.95%)

**Takeaways:** Images, links to familiar sites like the *New York Times*, popular hashtags and interaction with other accounts can all help improve Twitter visibility.

The newsletter has fewer followers, but gets a consistently higher rate of engagement than Twitter or Facebook. We need to make a concerted effort to increase the number of subscribers and build on that high-quality engagement.

Facebook, despite having the most followers, has the lowest engagement (from both us and our followers) of any of our social media platforms. We should try posting more often to capitalize on that higher follow rate.

#### **D. Conclusions/questions**

Our overall web traffic and social media presence are growing, but not quickly. There are some concrete steps we can take to improve this without any major expenditure. These include:

- Updating our content more often, on both social media and our main website.
- Encouraging member organizations to link to our site and share the work that we're doing with their members.
- Improving our ranking in search results by monitoring keyword usage and linking with other websites.

The biggest question is what we/our members want to get out of this website. It might be worth considering a poll or survey (using SurveyMonkey) of member organizations to get some feedback about where our web presence should go next.