



January 23, 2022

To: NCH Policy Board

From: Lee White, Executive Director

It was a busy year for the National Coalition for History (NCH) as this annual report details. Congress focused its attention this year on the President's infrastructure and social programs bills and COVID-related issues. As a result, final action on the fiscal year (FY) 2022 budget has been pushed back to mid-February.

Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Status

In May, the Biden administration released its proposed federal budget for FY 22. The House of Representatives passed all its FY 22 budget bills by the August recess. However, the Senate failed to act on any funding bills. That necessitated the adoption of a series of continuing resolutions (CRs) to keep the federal government operating after the FY 21 budget expired on September 30. The current CR keeps the government operating until February 18. The Senate Appropriations Committee released draft versions of FY 22 agency and program budgets in October. However, these may not reflect the final numbers. The attached chart details how programs of interest to our community fared. It includes the Biden proposed budget for FY22, the House-passed funding levels, the Senate draft numbers and compares them with the final FY21 budget. In general, archival and education programs will be level funded or receive small to moderate increases.

The Biden administration has announced it will indefinitely delay the release of its proposed FY 23 budget because of the failure of Congress to pass the FY 22 budget.

NCH Initiative to Increase FY 22 Funding for the National Archives

Over the past two years, NCH has prioritized advocacy in support of increased funding for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) funding. If the House and Senate numbers are any indication of the outcome, **NARA would see its first significant increase (seven percent) in many years.** The Biden administration, the House and the Senate are all proposing \$403.6 million for NARA's operating expenses (OE) budget in FY 22. In addition, the budget for the NHPRC would **increase 46 percent, from \$6.5 million to \$9.5 million.**

Unlike other federal history-related agencies and programs, the annual OE budget for NARA has remained stagnant for over a decade, even as the agency's responsibilities have increased. In FY 21, NARA received \$377 million, an \$18 million increase over the FY 20 level of \$359 million. However, that increase is misleading since the \$18 million was earmarked for one-time expenses

NARA incurred as part of the Biden presidential transition. In reality, NARA's FY 21 budget was flat lined at \$359 million.

[On May 21, NCH submitted testimony for the record to the House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government \(FSGG\).](#) We requested \$433 million for NARA's FY 22 OE budget and doubling the NHPRC budget up to \$13.5 million. NCH submitted identical testimony to the Senate FSGG Appropriations Subcommittee.

This year, we once again collaborated with Congressmen John Larson (D-CT), Don Young (R-AK), and Bill Pascrell (D-NJ) to seek support for additional funding in the FY 22 budget for NARA and the NHPRC. [They circulated a "Dear Colleague" letter to their fellow representatives urging them to show their support for NARA and the NHPRC.](#) This year we garnered forty-one signatures versus twenty-six last year. A "Dear Colleague" letter sponsored by Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Daniel Sullivan (R-AK) was circulated in the Senate which garnered the support of nineteen senators.

K-12 History and Civics Education

[Legislation](#) has been reintroduced that would authorize a multi-billion-dollar investment by the federal government in K-12 history and civics education. The sponsors in the US House of Representatives are Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK) and Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR). The lead sponsors in the US Senate are Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE) and Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX). [NCH has endorsed the bill](#) which has been renamed the ["Civics Secures Democracy Act. \(HR 1814, S. 879\)."](#) [The legislation:](#)

- Authorizes \$1 billion in spending per-year over the next six fiscal years for grants to states, institutions of higher education, qualified non-profits, and researchers.
- Establishes new grant programs for state and local education agencies to strengthen and improve their approach to civic and history education.
- Provides funding for non-profit entities to develop or expand access to evidence-based curricula, instructional models, and other educational programs to enhance student knowledge and achievement in civics and history.
- Provides grants to higher education institutions to assist in developing and implementing programs to train elementary and secondary school teachers in methods for instructing and engaging students in civics and history.
- Specifically prohibits use of the funds for the development of any national curriculum in American history or civic education.

Unrelated to the CSDA, in April the U.S. Department of Education issued a proposed set of priorities the agency would use in evaluating applications for the small existing American History and Civics academies and national grants programs. One of the priorities was focused on "the importance of including, in the teaching and learning of our country's history, both the consequences of slavery, and the significant contributions of Black Americans to our society." While well intentioned, the proposed priorities incited a harsh reaction on the right in Congress.

Senate Minority Leader McConnell sent a letter, signed by 38 Republican senators, to U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona requesting the withdrawal of the Department’s “Proposed Priorities” on American history and civics education.

In July, the Education Department issued a [revised request for applications](#) in response to overwhelming public opposition. The notice eliminated references to the *New York Times*’ “1619 Project” and scholar Ibram Kendi. Moreover, while emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive curricula and media literacy, the proposal clarified, “applicants are not required to address these priorities, and earn no additional points and gain no competitive advantage in the grant competition for addressing these priorities.”

The unintended consequence of the Department of Education’s proposed priorities was to derail momentum for the CSDA despite the fact the two are unrelated. The lead Republicans on the bill, Representative Tom Cole (R-OK) and Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) were pressured by their GOP colleagues to withdraw their co-sponsorship of the bill. While they chose not to do so, the original bill is in the process of being rewritten to address policy concerns that have been raised and to identify a budget “offset” to pay for the new programs. As a result, our advocacy efforts on the CSDA have been put on hold pending reintroduction of a revised bill.

NCH Statement in Opposition to “Divisive Concepts” Legislation

[On May 20, NCH issued a statement opposing “Divisive Concepts” legislation.](#) Legislation currently under consideration by numerous state legislatures around the country menaces the academic freedom essential to all classrooms, especially those where history is the focus of discussion and debate. Such bills have been introduced in twenty-nine states and are designed to limit discussion about racism, sexism, and discrimination in the classroom and/or the workplace. What is especially pernicious about these bills is that they masquerade as legislation defending free speech, but in fact have been purposely designed to curb consideration of subjects controversial and in any way critical of American society and culture.

NCH has joined the [Learn from History Coalition](#). Organized by [Stand for Children](#), Learn from History is a coalition of parents, educators, and other concerned Americans who are working together to combat “divisive concepts” bills and to ensure that all children can learn accurate, thorough, and fact-based history in our schools.

I prepared a presentation, delivered by Jim Grossman, at the 2022 AHA Annual Meeting session providing advocacy techniques and responses to discredit “Critical Race Theory” and “Divisive Concepts” disinformation at the local level.

Civil Rights Cold Case Collection Act

In January 2019, President Trump signed into law the “Civil Rights Cold Case Records Collection Act of 2018” (Public Law 115-426). It authorizes the National Archives and Records

Administration to create a collection of unsolved civil rights case files. In addition, the law establishes a Civil Rights Cold Case Review Board to determine which records can be released to the public.

The law delineates the appointment process for five individuals to serve on the review board, sets timelines for appointments, names groups qualified to recommend appointments, and the qualifications required for members of the review board. It designates the American Historical Association, Organization of American Historians, Society of American Archivists and American Bar Association as groups to be consulted in the nomination process. NCH facilitated the submission of potential nominees to the White House on behalf of AHA, OAH and SAA.

President Trump did not name anyone to the board before the end of his term. However, the Biden administration has nominated four of the five members of the review board, and they are awaiting Senate confirmation. They are Emory University archivist **Gabrielle Dudley**, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist **Henry Klibanoff**, civil rights lawyer **Margaret Burnham**, and UCLA Professor of History and Professor of African American Studies **Dr. Brenda Stevenson**.

NCH's Involvement in Planning for the Nation's 250th Anniversary Celebration

The U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission has intensified its planning to commemorate the nation's 250th anniversary in 2026, hiring many new staff. NCH is a member of the USA 250 steering committee convened by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) that is providing advice to the commission.

Reauthorization of the Title VI/Fulbright-Hays International Education Programs

NCH has long been involved in advocacy efforts led by the Coalition for International Education to reauthorize these programs at the Department of Education. Bipartisan stand-alone Title VI reauthorization bills in the House and Senate were introduced this year, both entitled the "Advancing International and Foreign Language Education Act."

The bill was included in a new, multipurpose "U.S. Innovation and Competition Act" (USICA), a compilation of legislation from numerous Senate committees aimed at strengthening our nation's abilities to successfully compete on the global stage. The Senate USICA bill's authorization is the largest in Title VI history. It provides \$208 million for FY 22 and "such sums as may be necessary for each of the 5 succeeding fiscal years." The bill passed the Senate with bipartisan support in June.