



September 16, 2022

The Honorable Gary C. Peters
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs
442 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Peters and Ranking Member Portman,

We are writing to enthusiastically endorse the pending nomination of Dr. Colleen J. Shogan to become the eleventh Archivist of the United States (AOTUS). The National Coalition for History (NCH) is a consortium of 43 organizations that advocates and educates on federal legislative and regulatory issues affecting historians, archivists, researchers, educators, students, documentary editors, preservationists, genealogists, political scientists, museum professionals and others. As historians and conservators of American history and culture we care deeply about the programs and activities of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). Given the breadth of our membership, we represent nearly all of NARA's major constituencies.

The National Archives is at a critical point in its history. NARA faces major challenges including the transition at the end of this year to only accepting electronic records from federal agencies, backlogs in fulfilling requests for veterans' records, declassification, and Freedom of Information Act inquiries and the pending addition of two presidential libraries. Added to this is the reality over the last decade of having more responsibilities placed upon the agency without a commensurate increase in funding.

The new Archivist should possess a skill set that allows the individual to deal with many dichotomies. The Archivist must be non-partisan, but also possess the political skills needed to serve as an aggressive advocate for NARA's programs on Capitol Hill and within the Administration. The Archivist must be both a visionary and a hands-on manager, committed to providing the maximum amount of public access to NARA's holdings allowed by law yet make difficult resource allocation decisions that may result in delays in the processing and release of records. The individual must address a logjam of records on the back end, while addressing the exponential growth of new records generated every year on the front end. No one person can be expected to do this alone, but she or he must have the management skills needed to build a strong team of archival professionals, historians, and support staff.

Dr. Shogan has the requisite experience and management background to meet these challenges. We believe her senior leadership positions at the Library of Congress and Congressional Research Service (CRS) exemplify a commitment to government service. As you know,

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Congress relies on the CRS to provide it with unbiased non-partisan advice on a host of topics. Throughout her career Dr. Shogan has exemplified those qualities.

Although Dr. Shogan holds a doctorate in political science, she has spent her career working across disciplines with historians, educators, librarians, archivists, students, preservationists, museum professionals and many others who represent NARA's "customer base." Her breadth of knowledge and experience make her uniquely qualified to manage an organization with so many stakeholders. Her work at the White House Historical Association also included development of public education programs, an important part of NARA's portfolio.

The Archivist of the United States serves a vital, if not always well understood or appreciated, role in our democracy. The Archives has a responsibility to ensure that the records of the federal government are collected, processed, maintained, and made available to the public. Without this documentary record, our citizens lack the ability to hold our leaders accountable, and for future citizens to understand our history. In a time where some have questioned the ability of our democracy to function, the role of the Archivist becomes even more critical. They must preserve NARA's reputation for openness and impartiality. We are confident Dr. Shogan will serve with distinction and always hold paramount the public trust being placed in her by your confirmation of her nomination.

Sincerely,



Lee White
Executive Director
National Coalition for History