

(Sample letter to Congressional delegation)

Please personalize as much as possible:

Dear [Senator/Representative _____] As a constituent, I am concerned by recent reports that the Trump Administration is considering elimination of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), among other agencies. I urge you to support robust funding and oppose any proposal that would eliminate this vital agency.

NEH's programs teach essential skills and habits including reading, writing, critical thinking, and effective communication that are crucial for ensuring that our citizens learn and become a productive member of society.

Employers increasingly seek employees who can combine the cultural knowledge and analytical ability fostered by these programs with technical knowledge and scientific research fostered by STEM education to create innovation and economic growth.

In the past two years, NEH has added the Standing Together initiative to its already critical work. The initiative funds reading groups for veterans that help them process their experiences through discussions of literature on war and homecoming; writing programs for veterans suffering from PTSD; intensive college-preparation programs; and training for Veterans Affairs staff to help them understand the experiences of veterans.

The South Dakota Humanities Council has made a concerted effort to support the Standing Together Initiative. We launched our first Veterans Writing Contest in 2016, receiving 32 submissions from throughout the state, from WWII veterans to active duty enlisted service members. Three finalists read their work at the South Dakota Festival of Books, where the winner was announced and awarded a \$1,000 prize. The appreciation of those sharing their stories has convinced us to make this contest bigger and better in 2017.

In addition to this initiative, NEH continues to support the work of humanities councils like our award-winning South Dakota Humanities Council – all independent nonprofits in every state and territory – as well as museums, libraries, and universities, to preserve and explore local history and traditions; promote understanding among diverse communities; and foster a sense of our common ideals, enduring civic values, and shared cultural heritage.

NEH funding of the South Dakota Humanities Council provides critical leverage for our programming, which reached 48,000 people in 72 communities in 2016. SDHC's Young Readers Initiative has given away more than 11,000 age-appropriate books to elementary students, while the annual South Dakota Festival of Books unites thousands of readers with well-known authors such as National Book Award winners Louise Erdrich and Sherman Alexie.

[Please add a story from your own experience or from your community that demonstrates the value of our work in NH]

While I appreciate the difficult budgetary decisions ahead, I strongly believe that NEH must be a high priority.

Thank you for your commitment to the educational, cultural, and civic health of our nation through your support of the NEH and South Dakota Humanities Council. [Name] [Address]