



20 Senators sign on to support directed funding for NARA in the 2023 Budget

Our board recently had the pleasure of working again with Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK) on a new “Dear Colleague” letter that calls for additional directed funding for NARA. This signed letter (which can be viewed [here](#)) calls for a full opening and staffing of NARA’s research rooms. In addition to calling for more funding, the letter states that:

*“NARA should be **directed** to use the funds to manage the numerous programmatic concerns from the agency's Inspector General, the Government Accountability Office, and multiple NARA user constituencies. Among those concerns are staffing for NARA's public research rooms and upgrades to NARA's information technology (IT) infrastructure. **NARA's in-person research rooms should be fully open and staffed to meet demand for basic services and records access at pre-pandemic levels.**”*

This letter is solid evidence that researchers and our members are being heard by elected officials. Keep up the good work!

ARA continues advocating for directed funding for 2023

For two years now, our ARA Board of Directors and some of our devoted members have met with hundreds of House and Senate staffers in an effort to educate Congress on the importance of the National Archives to our nation and their constituents. As many of you know, our efforts helped convince our nations’ elected officials to allot an additional \$20 million to the National Archives in the 2022 budget.

ARA founders had two major goals in mind when this organization was formed in 2020, and number one was to help reverse the chronic underfunding this agency faced this

past decade. Their chronic budget woes resulted in significantly reduced research room hours and visitor services, so we asked Congress to provide 'directed funding' and to require NARA to properly fund critical research room services.

Our second priority was to advocate for a resumption of pre-pandemic levels of access for in person researchers once NARA reopened. Even back in 2020 it was clear to us that bringing staff back to work after the health emergency and adjusting agency operations for increasing health and safety requirements would be a challenge. We knew the reduced services and records access offered during and after the pandemic could easily become 'the new normal', including appointment system rationing and waitlists. While Congress clearly agrees with us that in-person access to federal records should return to pre-pandemic levels, full access has **not** yet been restored.

We do hope a new Archivist will prioritize the needs of stakeholders in a way that allows patrons research to resume unimpeded.

Our Vision For the Future

As the most frequent users of NARA's in-person research rooms, our members' feedback offers the best opportunity for NARA to improve in-person services. We understand the challenges public researchers face as they seek access to federal records and we know what public researchers need from NARA to succeed.

We have seen positive changes over the past few months but unfortunately access is still being limited in NARA's research rooms. Because the livelihood of ARA members is linked with the success of the National Archives, there is still much to be gained from our association continuing our activism. We hope the new Archivist of the United States will partner with our passionate and hard-working research patrons/members to seek increased funding and improve research services for the public. ARA would be a valuable partner as new agency leadership steps in and begins the hard work of seeking badly needed revenue for our archives.

How You Can Help

Please contact the offices of your [senators](#) (especially Senator [Van Hollen](#)-if you are a resident of Maryland) to say you want to see directed funding and language on NARA's research rooms from the Warren-Sullivan Dear Colleague letter added to the 2023 budget.

Thanks!

