Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 23, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Mr. Michael McDonald
General Counsel
National Endowment for the Humanities
400 7th St SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear President Trump and Mr. McDonald,

We write to express serious concern regarding National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funds being redirected toward the construction of a Triumphal Arch, intended to be located between Arlington National Cemetery and the Lincoln Memorial.[1] The Commemorative Works Act[2] (CWA) requires that commemorative works "may be established on federal land only as specifically authorized by law." This project lacks such Congressional authorization and detracts from NEH's core purpose of supporting humanities programs across the country.

NEH's Fiscal Year 2026 Spend Plan[3] includes the agency's intention to allocate $15 million toward "the Arch," with no additional breakdown of how the funding will be spent or who would be the recipient. A construction project of this nature, especially one previously described by President Trump as privately funded, falls well outside the intended use of NEH program funding. Allocating funds to a project that has no legal basis to proceed is an abuse of taxpayer dollars.

At the same time, museums, libraries, and local organizations nationwide wait for funding that Congress has already approved. NEH has yet to distribute appropriated funding for state and jurisdictional humanities councils, leaving these organizations in limbo halfway through the fiscal year. These institutions form the backbone of American civic and cultural life; redirecting their funding to a project that neither aligns with NEH's mission nor reflects congressional intent risks real and immediate harm to communities nationwide.

We respectfully ask that you respond in writing to these questions no later than May 31, 2026:

- What is the grant purpose for the $2 million of Special Initiative funds and the $13 million of matching grant funds?
- Who is the recipient of these awards? Please provide all application materials associated with these grants.
- Did the National Council on the Humanities review and approve this funding?
- Why has the Administration not followed statutory requirements in siting the project in Area I, and when will it notify the appropriate committees of Congress as required by the CWA?
- What legal authority is NEH using to provide these grants for a project that is lacking a statutorily required authorization?

[1] https://www.cfa.gov/system/files/meeting-materials/1-CFA-16APR26-1-EOP_DOI_Arch-pres%20%5BApr9%5D.pdf
[2] CWA (40 U.S.C. §§8901-8909)
[3] https://apportionment-public.max.gov/Spend%20Plans/FY2026%20NEH%20Spend%20Plan.pdf

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- If funds are available for this project, why have congressionally directed funds for NEH activities not yet been fully disbursed to state humanities councils?
- What is the anticipated project cost of the Arch, and what other funding sources are being used for this project?
- What will be the total cost of the project to taxpayers, beyond the $15 million identified in NEH's FY2026 Full Year Spend Plan?
- Will the Administration commit to full public disclosure of all private funding sources for the Arch, including a list of any donors and amounts contributed or pledged?

We are concerned that NEH funding is being diverted to an unauthorized project while funding explicitly directed by Congress remains undelivered to its intended recipients. That inconsistency warrants a clear and public explanation. We urge you to reconsider this course of action and ensure that congressionally appropriated funds are used as intended.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

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