



**Records
Preservation
& Access Coalition**

**FY2027
Policy Priorities**



Records Preservation & Access Coalition

The Records Preservation and Access Coalition (RPAC) is a nationwide coalition that advises the genealogical and historical communities and other interested parties on ensuring proper access to vital records and on policy related to strong records preservation practices.

Statistics indicate that **more than 1,000 genealogists live in every congressional district.** Genealogists are researchers, writers, forensics specialists, geneticists, educators, and hobbyists. You probably have a genealogist or family historian in your family.

Genealogists are integral to our financial markets and justice system. Every day, 2,200 professional, forensic, and board-certified genealogists perform important legal and forensic work that intersects with significant federal and state initiatives, including:

1. working with law enforcement to identify recent and cold case suspects,
2. aiding DoD in identifying military remains and finding next of kin for repatriation,
3. proving Native American tribal membership,
4. tracking relatives with possible inheritable diseases,
5. conducting research for probate cases,
6. helping adoptees find birth parents,
7. locating owners or heirs in land disputes, and
8. locating owners of oil and gas leases.

The Records Preservation and Access Coalition (RPAC) represents more than 2,500 local, state, regional, national, and international organizations across the United States. Our work is sponsored by the National Genealogical Society and the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies with the support of the American Society of Genealogists, the Association of Professional Genealogists, the Board for Certification of Genealogists, the International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists, and major genealogy companies. These organizations represent **more than 500,000 members and millions of people researching family history.**



SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

Action Needed

We urge Congress to safeguard and preserve the records of the federal government and ensure continuing access to these documents by genealogists, historians, and other researchers. Congress must provide robust funding to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) sufficient to meet the increasing needs for records preservation and access. Funding must include full support for the National Archives and Federal Records Center facilities, the National Personnel Records Center, and National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) grants. The National Archives is funded under the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill.

Background

Genealogists are the largest user group of the National Archives and have been for decades. Many genealogy society research groups and individual researchers from across the United States visit the National Archives and its facilities annually. Thousands of professional genealogists, as well as large companies like Ancestry and FamilySearch, rely on the National Archives for information. Professional genealogists use the National Archives to assist clients in identifying records and preparing reports. Genealogy companies support NARA by assisting with digitization activities and making records publicly available. Your constituents use the National Archives to research their ancestors, leaving a legacy for their family and adding to the American historical record.

Robust funding for the National Archives is necessary to manage, preserve, and make accessible the federal government's records. NARA's budget in FY26 is \$421 million, with just over 2,400 total staff across over 40 facilities around the country. NARA is no longer able to support its core mission. The agency is at risk of mission failure due to a decades-long gap between ever-increasing holdings and stagnant resources.

SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION, CONT'D

The result is frustrated researchers, who now wait years for NARA to start work on requests for records that aren't open yet. **NARA needs to be funded to a level appropriate for the ever-increasing volume of its archival holdings**, allowing NARA to:

- hire more archivists,
- acquire better technology to work with electronic records, and
- dramatically expand digitization.

NHPRC grants to state partners help preserve and strengthen access to state, county, and municipal records, as well as support broader outreach and preservation within each state. We are concerned that NHPRC did not meet in 2025 and no grants were approved nor funded. In this, the United States Semiquincentennial year, local historical projects should be approved and funded. NHPRC is a vital program and must be maintained. Although NHPRC has a small budget of \$5 million, local communities rely on these funds to preserve historic record collections, a priority of the genealogy community.

Our community supplements NARA resources and has for years. Companies and non-profit entities work with NARA microfilming and digitizing federal records, including the Census and the War of 1812 Pension Files. The genealogy community is funding a new \$2 million project to digitize Veteran Bounty Land Warrant Application Files at NARA. In addition to financial support, genealogists donate millions of volunteer hours indexing microfilmed and digitized records to make them more accessible. Genealogists from every U.S. county use the military, land, census, tax, and other records from the National Archives.

We support NARA wholeheartedly.

We ask Congress to provide robust funding to NARA to meet its 21st Century demands and responsibilities, including funding for NHPRC.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES BY THE NUMBERS

Locations 40 facilities in 17 states, plus the District of Columbia (↓3 since 2025)

Number of Staff 2,405 (↓ from 2891 in 2025)

Size of Permanent Archival Holdings

- 13.5 billion pieces of paper
- More than 725,000 artifacts
- More than 450 million feet of film, or about 85,302 miles
- 41 million photographs
- 40 million aerial images
- 10 million maps, charts, and architectural/engineering drawings
- More than 33 billion electronic records (1 petabyte)

Archival Holdings

In 2024, the National Archives accessioned 88,498 cubic feet of analog records and 463 terabytes of electronic records into the permanent archival collection.

Onsite Access in 2024

- 27 public research rooms
- 45,144 research visits
- 278,469 items accessed in NARA research rooms
- 2,122,359 museum visitors

Digital Access in 2025

- 455,181,443 pages of digitized records in the Archives Catalog (↑80M since 2025)
- 129 million National Archives Catalog page views (↑43M since 2025)
- 84,241 off-site reference requests fulfilled (2024)

Federal Records Centers

- 26 million cubic feet of federal agency records
- 1,603,870 requests for veterans' records fulfilled in 2024
- Over 725,000 reference requests and 9.4 million IRS requests completed in 2023

Source: <https://www.archives.gov/about/info/national-archives-by-the-numbers>



SUPPORT FOR MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Action Needed

Genealogists and family historians are frequent patrons of America's museums, libraries, and archives. We are deeply concerned about the impacts to our communities from the loss of crucial federal support for these local institutions. **Congress must ensure that essential federal funding to state, county, and local libraries, museums, and archives is restored.**

Background

Libraries, museums, and archives drive economic growth and generate strong return on investment in their communities. As major patrons of these institutions, genealogists and family historians help drive local economies through cultural tourism. As an example, the Genealogy Center of the Allen County Public Library in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, hosts thousands of genealogists from around the country each year for research and education. Two major national genealogy conferences convened in Ft. Wayne (in 2025 and 2026) solely to be near the library's collection.

A letter from major U.S. publishers (Penguin Random House et al, 3 April 2025) indicated that "30+ million Americans rely on their public libraries for internet access. In rural areas, 83 percent of libraries are the only source of free internet access in their communities." They further stated, and we strongly agree, that these institutions are welcoming spaces for Americans of all ages to gather, learn, and grow.

Recent actions effectively shutting the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) abruptly halted federal funding for these important institutions significantly risking facility closures and the loss of economic growth and investment.

We ask Congress to restore funding to our local libraries, museums, and archives and reject further attempts to weaken federal support for these essential places.

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Coalition Sponsors

International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies
National Genealogical Society

Coalition Steering Committee

American Society of Genealogists
Association of Professional Genealogists
Board for Certification of Genealogists
Int'l Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists
Major Genealogy Companies



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