



**Prepared Testimony before the  
U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee  
on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies  
April 18, 2013**

Chairman Simpson, Ranking Member Moran, and Members of the Subcommittee, on behalf of The National Endowment for the Humanities and ... thank you for the opportunity to address this panel.

From the dawn of our nation to the present, the humanities have shaped our common identity, framed the momentous debates of the day and informed our decisions about the future.

We revere the brilliance of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. We return again and again to the compelling logic of *The Federalist Papers* written by Hamilton, Madison and Jay. But those authors and documents could have emerged only from a citizenry steeped in the humanities.

In colonial pamphlets and newspapers, we do not find liberty suddenly appearing in the abstract. It was drawn from the wellspring of the humanities: the philosophy of Aristotle and Rousseau, the history of Tacitus, the literature of Shakespeare and even the poetry of Virgil.

As a nation, we would be impoverished if we did not continue to preserve and explore this legacy. We should improve upon our understanding of America's intellectual history.

I would cite just two examples [from my university] ...

... At a time of troubling deficits, what is the compelling case for the humanities? I have seen—and continue to see—real-world evidence demonstrating their utility. I have seen it as a citizen, professor and author. I have seen it as a university president. I have seen it throughout the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, whose members vigorously support NEH.

Without robust support for scholarship in history and political philosophy, the caliber of our civic debate and understanding of democracy are diminished.

Without adequate support for foreign language and area studies, our national security, homeland defense, diplomacy, and foreign aid are diminished.

*The 9/11 Commission Report*, for example, points out that many Americans had no knowledge whatsoever of the “history, culture, and body of beliefs from which Bin Laden shaped and spread his message.”

This hindered our nation’s ability to craft national security strategies prior to 9/11. It has hindered our reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. If left untended, it will hinder our effectiveness in future conflicts.

At times, some in the humanities community have deplored the massive funding for science and technology compared to the small sums allocated for the humanities. We should never begrudge funding for science and technology. However, I also believe some balance is warranted.

As we meet, genomic research is racing ahead. We can forecast with some certainty that its findings will present unprecedented ethical questions to doctors, citizens and this Congress.

Questions of fairness, questions of the definition of humanity, questions about core values—all of these can only be answered by the humanities.

In his first inaugural address James Madison spoke of the importance of investing in agriculture, industry, and commerce. In the very next clause, he said America should “favor in like manner the advancement of science and the diffusion of information as the best aliment to true liberty.”

Members of the committee, I would submit that the National Endowment of the Humanities is the critical for the true liberty that our nation hopes to attain and the legacy we hope to conserve.