

**Statement of Kent Whitworth, Director and CEO, Minnesota Historical Society  
To US Congress, Appropriations Interior Subcommittee  
February 24, 2020**

**Thank you, Congresswoman McCollum, for the opportunity to discuss the great partnership between federal, state and local agencies and organizations in support of history and culture.**

**An informed citizenry is a foundation of our nation and a clear understanding of our past is a crucial component of our democratic system.**

**It is essential that we, together with our neighbors, understand our past in all of its complexity and messiness. We at the Minnesota Historical Society, along with numerous partner organizations, have worked to preserve and make accessible, our history for more than 170 years. We recognize that all voices in our community have a stake in our society and we strive to collect and present a comprehensive and diverse perspective on our past.**

**With the help of federal agencies including the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute for Museum and Library Services and others, we have been fortunate to work to present this past to all Minnesotans and beyond.**

**Let me highlight just two areas in which we have worked, with the help of NEH and IMLS resources:**

**First, our creative Minnesota Historical Society exhibits staff, working with community partners, has developed a series of exhibits that present the past in an engaging and interactive manner. The "1968" exhibit, which traveled across the nation, brought to life culture, social change, as well as progress and tragedy, from that pivotal year. "Over There," our World War 1 centennial exhibit, examined the rapid changes in this era from globalization, to changes in public health, to race relations.**

**Another initiative which has helped to expand access to the past is the National Digital Newspaper Program, which has been funded through the NEH. This project has allowed us to digitize and make accessible, 100 titles, with 546,000 pages. It was an honor to show you our digital newspaper operation at the Minnesota History Center just a few weeks ago. This NEH program complements initiatives supported**

by the State and other funding sources. Together they create an important window into our collective past. In addition to the newspapers that are very familiar to most of us, this rich Minnesota Historical Society collection includes newspapers published by the African American community including the Appeal, the Northwestern Star, the St. Paul Echo among others; newspapers published in the Dakota and Ojibwe languages; and newspapers from more recent arrivals including Czech, Danish, English, Finnish, French, German, and Norwegian to name a few. The collection also includes the Prison Mirror from Stillwater, MN, one of the nation's oldest newspapers published in a prison.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge our strong support for the Historic Preservation Fund, which provides basic support for the historic preservation infrastructure through State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs), as well as for key programs such as Save America's Treasures. When you visit the Minnesota State Capitol, on the first floor rotunda, you will see a collection of flags that represent our proud military history. These flags desperately needed to be conserved, so working with the Minnesota Department of Military Affairs, which had custody of the flags, the Minnesota Historical Society combined funding from the State, Save America's Treasures and a private foundation to preserve these flags, and return them to a visible place where both today's and future Minnesotans can learn from these historic artifacts.

Chair McCollum, you know that history is not only relevant, it is essential. We are grateful for your leadership and strong support for the funding of all of these important agencies and the work that is carried out across the nation with the resources provided from our important partner, the federal government.