

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9558

To establish a grant program in the National Endowment for the Arts
to document the American experience.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 30, 2026

Mr. LIEU (for himself, Ms. LEGER FERNANDEZ, Mr. TONKO, Ms. WILLIAMS
of Georgia, and Ms. NORTON) introduced the following bill; which was re-
ferred to the Committee on Education and Workforce

A BILL

To establish a grant program in the National Endowment
for the Arts to document the American experience.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “21st Century Federal
5 Writers’ Project Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The observance and commemoration of the
9 250th anniversary of the founding of the United

1 States are of major significance to the national her-
2 itage.

3 (2) The 250th anniversary of the founding of
4 the United States should inspire patriotism and na-
5 tional unity.

6 (3) Documenting the full breadth of the Amer-
7 ican experience, including the history, culture, cus-
8 toms, folklore, and daily life of communities across
9 all States and regions, will foster mutual under-
10 standing and national unity.

11 (4) Nearly a century ago, the Federal Writers’
12 Project employed up to 7,700 people to document
13 the American experience, producing—

14 (A) the American Guide Series, which in-
15 cluded 48 States, 40 cities, 18 regions and ter-
16 ritories, and countless counties; and

17 (B) more than 1,000 books and pamphlets
18 covering local and regional histories, folklore
19 collections, humor, and nature studies.

20 (5) The commemoration of the 250th anniver-
21 sary of the United States merits a new portrait of
22 American life, capturing the history, culture, agri-
23 culture, industry, infrastructure, and communities
24 that define this Nation, produced by a 21st-Century
25 Federal Writers’ Project.

1 (6) The National Endowment for the Arts is
 2 the appropriate Federal agency to administer a pro-
 3 gram supporting literary and documentary arts that
 4 capture the full diversity and vitality of the Amer-
 5 ican experience, consistent with its mission under
 6 the National Foundation on the Arts and the Hu-
 7 manities Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 951 et seq.).

8 (7) American feature writers, photographers,
 9 and documentary artists possess skills uniquely suit-
 10 ed to preserving a living record of American life for
 11 future generations.

12 **SEC. 3. 21ST CENTURY FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT**
 13 **GRANT PROGRAM.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the
 15 date of enactment of this Act, the Chair of the National
 16 Endowment for the Arts (in this section referred to as the
 17 “Chair”), with the advice of the National Council of the
 18 Arts, shall establish a competitive grant program (in this
 19 section referred to as the “Program”) to provide grants
 20 to eligible entities described in subsection (d) to document
 21 in writing and images the history, culture, customs, folk-
 22 lore, and lived experience of the American people.

23 (b) ADVISORY PANEL.—

24 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days
 25 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Chair-

1 person shall appoint an advisory panel comprising 5
2 members to assist in developing guidelines for the
3 Program.

4 (2) MEMBERS.—The advisory panel shall in-
5 clude—

6 (A) a member representing the literary
7 arts, documentary audiovisual, or print jour-
8 nalism communities;

9 (B) the Librarian of Congress, or the Li-
10 brarian’s designee;

11 (C) a member representing a State arts
12 agency;

13 (D) a member representing communities
14 underserved by existing arts and literary pro-
15 grams, including rural and Tribal communities;
16 and

17 (E) a member with expertise in—

18 (i) the original Federal Writers’
19 Project;

20 (ii) involved with ongoing efforts to
21 reproduce it; and

22 (iii) with Federal experience with ad-
23 ministering nationwide programs.

24 (3) REPORTS.—Not later than 90 days after
25 the advisory panel is established, the panel shall sub-

1 mit to the Chairperson a report with recommended
2 guidelines for the Program, including criteria for
3 evaluating applications and ensuring that projects
4 collectively cover the geographic and cultural breadth
5 of the American experience.

6 (4) TERMINATION.—The advisory panel shall
7 terminate not later than 90 days after the submis-
8 sion of the report under paragraph (3).

9 (c) GRANT ADMINISTRATION.—

10 (1) GRANT PARAMETERS.—The Chairperson
11 shall determine—

12 (A) the parameters and scope of the Pro-
13 gram; and

14 (B) the amount and duration of grant
15 awards, except that no individual grant award-
16 ed for a fiscal year shall exceed an amount
17 equal to 10 percent of the amounts appro-
18 priated under subsection (l) for such fiscal year.

19 (2) LIMITATION.—Notwithstanding section 5(e)
20 of the National Foundation on the Arts and the Hu-
21 manities Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 954(e)), the match-
22 ing requirement shall not apply to grants made
23 under this section.

24 (3) EDITORIAL AND CURATORIAL ROLE.—In
25 administering the Program, the Chairperson shall—

1 (A) publish, prior to the first solicitation of
2 grant applications, an editorial framework for
3 the Program that—

4 (i) identifies the thematic and subject-
5 matter scope of the Program as a whole;

6 (ii) establishes standards for factual
7 accuracy, editorial consistency, fair and
8 balanced geographic and demographic cov-
9 erage, and attribution of individual works;
10 and

11 (iii) identifies the intended forms of
12 publication and distribution for works pro-
13 duced under the Program, which includes
14 not only books, but periodicals, digital
15 media, audio recordings, documentary film,
16 and other formats;

17 (B) enter into a contract or cooperative
18 agreement with a qualified organization to serve
19 as the editor-in-chief and executive editor for
20 the Program. Such organization shall be re-
21 sponsible for—

22 (i) providing editorial guidance to
23 grant recipients consistent with the edi-
24 torial framework established under sub-
25 paragraph (A);

1 (ii) reviewing and approving works
2 prior to public release to ensure compliance
3 with Program standards; and

4 (iii) reporting to the Chairperson on
5 the progress and geographic and thematic
6 coverage of the Program;

7 (C) coordinate with grant recipients to en-
8 sure that the subject matter of individual
9 projects collectively covers the full range of top-
10 ics and regions contemplated by the Program,
11 avoiding duplication and gaps in geographic or
12 thematic coverage;

13 (D) facilitate the production and publica-
14 tion of works developed under the Program, in-
15 cluding by entering into agreements with pub-
16 lishers, distributors, or other entities to make
17 such works available to the public in print and
18 digital formats; and

19 (E) ensure that the Program as a whole
20 replicates, to the greatest extent practicable, the
21 scope, editorial standards, and public-facing
22 mission of the original Federal Writers' Project
23 of the 1930s and 1940s.

24 (d) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—To be eligible to receive a
25 grant under this section, an entity shall—

1 (1) submit an application to the Chair at such
2 time, in such form, and in such manner as the Chair
3 may require; and

4 (2) be one of the following:

5 (A) A nonprofit, tax-exempt organization
6 with experience in literary arts, documentary
7 arts, journalism, oral history, or the collection
8 and dissemination of cultural or educational
9 content.

10 (B) The fiscally sponsored projects of or-
11 ganizations under subparagraph (A).

12 (C) A State arts agency established pursu-
13 ant to section 5(g) of the National Foundation
14 on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965
15 (20 U.S.C. 954(g)), or a regional arts organiza-
16 tion designated by the National Endowment for
17 the Arts.

18 (D) A State or territorial commission es-
19 tablished by State legislation or executive order
20 for the purpose of commemorating the 250th
21 anniversary of the founding of the United
22 States.

23 (e) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—An eligible entity re-
24 ceiving a grant under this section shall use grant funds
25 to engage individuals to produce written, photographic,

1 audio, or other documentary works capturing the history,
2 culture, customs, folklore, and lived experience of the
3 American people, and may use grant funds for related ad-
4 ministrative, training, and editorial activities directly sup-
5 porting such work.

6 (f) PREFERENCE FOR CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS.—In
7 selecting individuals to receive funds, a eligible entity shall
8 give preference to individuals with education or experience
9 in—

10 (1) literary arts, journalism, documentary arts,
11 or oral history; or

12 (2) occupations described in the Standard Oc-
13 cupational Classification for categories 25–0000
14 (Education, Training, and Library Occupations) and
15 27–0000 (Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and
16 Media Occupations).

17 (g) GEOGRAPHIC AND THEMATIC SCOPE.—In select-
18 ing the recipients and evaluating applications under this
19 section for a grant, the Chair shall ensure that the
20 projects funded under the Program, taken as a whole, col-
21 lectively document communities and subjects from all re-
22 gions of the United States, including—

23 (1) urban, suburban, and rural communities;

24 (2) Tribal communities;

1 (3) each of the major geographic regions of the
2 United States; and

3 (4) the full range of subjects that defined the
4 original Federal Writers' Project, including history,
5 culture, customs, and folklore.

6 (h) REPOSITORY, ARCHIVE, AND PUBLICATION.—

7 (1) REPOSITORY.—The Chairperson shall estab-
8 lish a publicly accessible repository of works devel-
9 oped through the Program. Grant recipients shall
10 submit completed works to the repository and each
11 such work shall include attribution to the individual
12 writer, photographer, or artist who created it.

13 (2) ARCHIVE.—The Chairperson shall transmit
14 works received under paragraph (1) to the Librarian
15 of Congress not later than 90 days after their re-
16 ceipt. The Librarian of Congress shall establish an
17 archive program within the American Folklife Cen-
18 ter at the Library of Congress to collect and make
19 publicly available, in both digital and print formats,
20 the written and visual drafts and finished works pro-
21 duced under the Program, with attribution given to
22 each work's Creator.

23 (3) PUBLICATION.—The Chairperson shall fa-
24 cilitate the publication and public distribution of

1 written works produced under the Program. In carrying out this paragraph, the Chairperson may—

3 (A) enter into agreements with commercial, nonprofit, or government publishers for the
4 publication of books, anthologies, periodicals, or
5 other print or digital works derived from the
6 Program;

8 (B) use revenues derived from any such
9 publication agreements, to the extent permitted
10 by law, to support the ongoing activities of the
11 Program; and

12 (C) ensure that any published works include attribution to individual creators and to
13 the Program.

15 (i) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—

16 (1) GRANT RECIPIENT REPORTING.—The Chair
17 shall develop reporting guidelines for grant recipients under this section to include, at a minimum, information regarding—

20 (A) the amount of funds received and expended;

22 (B) the number of individuals engaged and works completed under the grant;

24 (C) the geographic location and subject matter of works completed under the grant;

1 (D) the number of public requests to ac-
2 cess or review completed works, where available;

3 (E) the number of copies of published
4 works distributed or sold, where applicable, in-
5 cluding through any agreements entered into
6 under subsection (h)(3);

7 (F) such other data as the Chairperson
8 considers important to assess Program efficacy;
9 and

10 (G) such other data as the Chairperson
11 considers important to assess Program efficacy.

12 (2) REPORTING TO CONGRESS.—Not less than
13 once each year while the program under this section
14 is in operation, the Chair shall submit a report to
15 the Committees on Appropriations and Education
16 and Workforce of the House of Representatives and
17 the Committees on Appropriations and Health, Edu-
18 cation, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate summa-
19 rizing—

20 (A) the data collected under paragraph
21 (1);

22 (B) the geographic and thematic distribu-
23 tion of projects funded under the Program; and

1 (C) the Chairperson's assessment of Pro-
2 gram efficacy and recommendations for im-
3 provement.

4 (j) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The Chair may reserve
5 not more than 20 percent of the funds made available to
6 carry out the Program for administrative costs of the Na-
7 tional Endowment for the Arts.

8 (k) COORDINATION WITH OTHER FEDERAL AGEN-
9 CIES.—The Chairperson may enter into interagency agree-
10 ments with other Federal agencies to fund the Program
11 and support the purposes, consistent with section 5(o) of
12 the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities
13 Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 954(o)).

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