

The Humanities Cultivate an Educated Workforce and Strengthen National Security

The humanities explore, interpret, and preserve the human experience across cultures and over time through fields of study that include language, literature, history, religion, philosophy, and art. The humanities – both as academic subjects and as a cultural force within society – cultivate an educated workforce, strengthen American democracy and national security, and enhance personal well-being. Universities represented by the Association of American Universities (AAU) are leaders in humanities research and education. Researchers at AAU member institutions compete for federal funding to produce vital humanities education, research, and public programs that benefit all Americans.

Which federal agencies support the humanities?

- The **National Endowment for the Humanities** (NEH) is the primary source of federal funding for the humanities in the United States. Since 1965, the NEH has awarded \$6 billion in grants to scholars, universities, historic sites, and humanities councils in every U.S. state and territory.
- The Departments of State and Education jointly oversee the **International and Foreign Language Education** (IFLE) programs, which provide Americans with opportunities to gain expertise in foreign languages and international and area studies both at home and abroad.
 - **Title VI programs** are domestic international education programs at U.S. colleges and universities; they include the Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships, which support graduate study of foreign languages and international area studies, and the National Resource Centers (NRC), which awards grants to universities to develop capacity in foreign languages and area studies.
 - The **Fulbright-Hays program** supports graduate and faculty research projects abroad.
- The **Institute of Museum and Library Services** (IMLS) provides funding for libraries, museums, archives, and historical societies in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

How can Congress support the humanities?

AAU urges Congress to firmly reject the FY27 budget request that would eliminate the NEH, IMLS, and IFLE programs. Instead, Congress should demonstrate its support for the humanities by funding federal agencies and initiatives that support humanities research, education, and public programs. For FY27, AAU respectfully requests:

- **\$215 million for the NEH** to support humanities research and education across the nation.
- **\$300 million for IMLS** to support museums, libraries, and archives across the nation.
- **\$85.7 million for IFLE programs** (Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs).

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Why should Congress support the humanities?

Humanities education cultivates the skills and mindsets necessary for democratic and civic engagement and success in work and life.

- Employers value the **skills and mindsets** fostered by a humanities education – curiosity, critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and persuasive writing. These skills have proven more durable over time and are widely applicable across industries.
- The humanities impart knowledge of the **nation's history, civics, and law**, crucial for civic engagement and democratic participation.

Humanities education strengthens America's national security and global leadership.

- A bipartisan commission found that **meeting global challenges** requires not just scientific expertise but a “citizenry with awareness and understanding of the histories, languages, customs, and religions of diverse cultures.”
- Foreign language fluency and cultural competencies are key elements of America's national security strategy. Title VI and Fulbright-Hays international programs **keep America safe** by training leaders with the language and regional expertise needed to assess foreign threats, manage risks, and conduct effective diplomacy.

Humanities research tells America's story, forging a shared sense of identity and belonging.

- The NEH has supported more than 9,000 works of biography, history, and literature – including **20 Pulitzer Prize winners and 22 Bancroft Prize winners** – and the Library of America collection, which prints works of classic American writing.
- In 2019, the NEH launched **A More Perfect Union**, a major investment in scholarly research, historic preservation, and public programs on American history and culture in honor of the nation's 250th anniversary, which will be observed July 4, 2026.

Humanities research ensures that artificial intelligence (AI) is consistent with human values.

- AI is a transformative technology that offers significant benefits to humanity but also poses social, moral, and legal challenges.
- Through its **Humanities Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence program**, the NEH has awarded more than \$6 million in competitive grants to leading research universities, including the University of California, Davis and University of Wisconsin–Madison (both AAU institutions), for research and teaching initiatives that explore AI's social, legal, and ethical impacts.

The public humanities provide broad access to history and culture through exhibits, historical sites, and educational programming at the state and local level.

- The NEH **serves all Americans** through humanities councils in all 50 states and U.S. territories, raising awareness of state and local history and culture.
- IMLS also supports **humanities education and cultural infrastructure** in all 50 states through grants to state and community libraries, museums, historical societies, and universities.

