

TESTIMONY OF DAVID S. FERRIERO

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BEFORE THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

“OPEN TO VISITORS? ASSESSING THE FEDERAL EFFORT TO MINIMIZE THE SEQUESTER’S IMPACT ON ACCESS TO OUR NATION’S CAPITAL AND NATIONAL TREASURES”

APRIL 16, 2013

Good morning Chairman Issa, Ranking Member Cummings, and Distinguished Members of the Committee; thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss the impact of sequestration on the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), our mission, and the services we provide to the public.

NARA MISSION

NARA’s mission is to store, preserve, and provide public access to the permanently valuable records of the Federal government. NARA works with other agencies to help them manage their records from the time the records are created until they are either disposed of or transferred to NARA’s ownership. NARA also provides temporary storage of other agencies’ records on a fee-for-service basis. Once permanent records are transferred into NARA’s legal custody, NARA stores and preserves the documents so that the public may discover, access, and use our records in perpetuity. NARA provides public access to our records through research rooms located across the country, mail and email correspondence, private sector partners, and on-line, at archives.gov and through various social media outlets.

NARA provides records management services, stores temporary records, and archives permanently valuable records from all three branches of Government. In total, NARA holds 33 million cubic feet of permanent and temporary records in more than 40 facilities across the United States, including the Presidential Libraries of 13 former Presidents. NARA performs its mission through its workforce of approximately 3,300 employees (2,600 of whom are full-time, permanent employees) and an annual appropriated budget of \$391 million. In fiscal year (FY) 2012, NARA received over 1.3 million written and in-person requests for records and nearly 51 million visitors accessed NARA websites to view Government records posted on-line and to learn more about the National Archives.

NARA CITIZEN SERVICES

NARA delivers service directly to the public by providing access to historical Government records that document the rights of citizens, allow Americans to hold their

government accountable, and help Americans to better understand their history and their Democracy.

NARA is a vital resource for citizens who need Government records to establish their identities, protect their rights, and access government benefits. In FY 2012, NARA responded to over 1.1 million requests from American veterans and their families, seeking documentation of military service necessary to qualify for health benefits and appropriate burials, and to replace lost medals and awards. NARA also holds vast stores of immigration and naturalization records, which Americans routinely request so that they can prove their citizenship or research their ancestry.

NARA supports Government accountability by preserving and ensuring continued public access to historical records that document and explain Government decisions. NARA supports public involvement in Government decision-making by publishing the daily Federal Register, which informs citizens of proposed regulations, public hearings and meetings, and grant opportunities. NARA expands public access to Government records by providing for the appropriate declassification of classified national security information at the National Declassification Center, and by improving the administration of the Freedom of Information Act through the Office of Government Information Services.

NARA also provides citizens with opportunities to learn more about American history and Government records through its nationwide program of education, outreach, and exhibits. NARA facilities and exhibits serve as platforms for public programs and educational activities that engage the public in learning about Democracy and American government. NARA operates museums and exhibit spaces at each of the 13 Presidential Libraries; at archival facilities in New York, NY, Atlanta, GA, and Kansas City, MO; and the flagship National Archives Experience museum in Washington, DC, which displays the original Declaration of Independence, United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Over three million people visited NARA exhibits nationwide in FY 2012, and an additional 680,000 people attended NARA educational and public programs.

NARA BUDGET

NARA receives Congressional funding in four discretionary appropriations, which totaled \$391 million in FY 2013 before sequestration. All four appropriations are subject to sequestration under section 251A of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (BBEDCA), as amended. Each NARA appropriation is treated as a unique “program, project, or activity” (PPA), the level at which sequestration is applied, with no further subdivision.

NARA receives additional funds directly from the public, through the National Archives Trust Fund and the National Archives Gift Fund, which are exempt from sequestration, with the exception of administrative expenses in the National Archives Trust Fund, which are subject to sequestration. Also, the Records Center Revolving Fund is not subject to sequestration.

Sequestration has reduced NARA's budget by \$19.7 million below the amounts provided in the FY 2013 appropriation. Sequestration has reduced NARA's appropriated budget to \$371 million, which includes \$354 million for the NARA Operating Expenses appropriation, \$3.9 million for the independent Office of Inspector General, \$8.6 million for Repairs and Restoration of NARA-owned Federal buildings, and \$4.7 million for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) Grants Program appropriation. Sequestration has reduced NARA's Trust Fund budget by an additional \$51 thousand. The impact of sequestration on each NARA account is listed in the chart below.

NARA FY 2013 SEQUESTRATION AMOUNTS

In Millions of Dollars

	FY 2013 Full-Year CR (Pre-Sequestration)	Sequester Amount	Resulting Budget Auth.
Operating Expenses	\$ 372.553	\$ 18.779	\$ 353.774
Office of Inspector General	4.092	0.206	3.886
NHPRC Grants Program	4.990	0.252	4.738
Repairs and Restoration	9.082	0.458	8.624
Total, NARA Appropriations	\$390.717	\$ 19.695	\$ 371.022

Sequestration has had a larger impact on NARA's budget than these numbers reveal. By the time sequestration was implemented on March 1, NARA had already obligated \$138 million of its appropriations, leaving just \$233 million available for the remainder of FY 2013. Because the sequestration occurred with only seven months remaining in FY 2013, NARA's \$19.7 million sequestration amount is equivalent to a 7.7 percent reduction in available funds for the remainder of the fiscal year.

NARA SEQUESTRATION PLANNING

NARA's primary objectives for implementing sequestration cuts are to preserve the agency mission and to minimize disruptions in agency services to the public. NARA has identified \$19.7 million in specific cuts to contracts, grants, and other spending that are consistent with these principles. Much of NARA's sequestration savings will come from deferring work on longer-term goals in order to focus on more immediate needs, primarily maintaining service to the public. NARA will delay or reduce investments in information technology, defer the preservation of some records, and reduce maintenance of NARA-owned facilities to the minimum necessary to preserve health and safety.

NARA's sequestration plan relies in part on budgetary savings from an agency-wide hiring freeze. The hiring freeze was essential to meeting the spending cuts required by sequestration, since 90 percent of NARA's budget provides for people and the relatively fixed costs of buildings and information technology. NARA has permitted a limited number of new hires, but only for positions that are critical to meet customer requirements. As a result, NARA's

workforce has shrunk by 299 employees (including those paid for from non-appropriated funds), or 8.5 percent of the workforce, since the hiring freeze was implemented in November 2011.

NARA has taken a number of additional steps to reduce spending in areas that do not directly impact mission fulfillment and public services. NARA has carefully reviewed the office space and motor vehicles that it rents from the General Services Administration (GSA) and has cancelled two small leases and returned 10 motor vehicles (14 percent of the NARA fleet) to GSA. NARA has reduced travel budgets to a level that is 41 percent below FY 2010 travel spending, cancelled all non-mission essential conferences, and prohibited future travel except where it is the most cost-effective way to maintain critical operations under sequestration. NARA has also dramatically reduced employee payments for recruitment, retention, and relocation incentives and, as of March 1, NARA will not provide discretionary monetary awards to employees, except where legally required.

Sequestration has also required that NARA reduce public hours in its two largest facilities, the National Archives buildings in Washington, DC, and College Park, MD. NARA public research rooms at both facilities are normally open for the public to research Government records six days a week from 9 AM to 5 PM, with extended hours from 5 PM to 9 PM on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Due to sequestration, NARA will no longer offer extended hours. NARA public research rooms will remain open to the public from 9 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Saturday, year round.

NARA's public exhibit space at the National Archives at Washington, DC, has also been impacted by sequestration. The National Archives Experience (NAE) museum is open to the public from 10 AM to 5:30 PM seven days a week. In the past, NARA has extended public hours until 7 PM from March 15 through Labor Day. Due to sequestration, NARA will no longer offer these extended hours. NARA's museum will remain open to the public from 10 AM to 5:30 PM, seven days a week, year round.

These are not decisions that NARA made lightly. NARA began sequestration planning by conducting a detailed review of all contracts and other spending items to find opportunities to reduce, delay, and cut spending while preserving NARA's mission and services to the public. NARA leadership considered all viable options and only considered reductions in public hours after all alternatives had been exhausted. NARA decided to reduce public hours after reviewing attendance data that showed the extended hours were underutilized by the public and that they extended beyond the visitor hours of comparable museums and institutions.

NARA records of hourly visitors to its Washington, DC, and College Park, MD facilities showed that attendance at NARA research rooms and exhibits declines significantly after 5 PM. Every day, NARA staff walk-through public research rooms every hour, on the half hour, and count the number of researchers present at that time. For all of FY 2012, NARA recorded an average of 92 researchers per hour in its research rooms in Washington, DC, and College Park, MD, facilities between 9 AM and 5 PM, including Saturdays. On the days that NARA is open until 9 PM, NARA averaged only 35 researchers per hour between 5 PM and 9 PM and, by 8:30 PM, NARA averaged just 15 researchers in total at both facilities.

NARA counts public visits to its Washington, DC museum by counting visitors as they enter the building. During the months that the NAE museum offers extended hours (March 15 through Labor Day), NARA receives an average of 427 visitors per hour, from 10 AM to 5 PM. Museum visitorship drops off dramatically after 5 PM, trailing off to an average of only 151 visitors per hour after 6 PM. In FY 2012, over 1 million people visited NARA's NAE museum, and more than 91 percent arrived between 10 AM and 5 PM.

NARA also compared its public hours for the NAE museum to visitor hours at other, comparable museums and institutions. NARA looked at 20 other public and private museums located on and around the National Mall. Only five museums listed daily operating hours that extended beyond 5:30 PM, including extended "Summer hours". Only three of the identified public museums will stay open more hours per week than the 52.5 hours that NARA's museum will be open to the public each week under sequestration.

The reductions in hours at NARA's NAE museum and at public research rooms in Washington, DC, and College Park, MD are difficult but necessary to continue agency operations with the reduced funding levels of sequestration. NARA considered these reductions as part of a comprehensive and deliberate review of all agency spending. NARA's decision to reduce evening hours at these locations was based on data and analysis that indicated that the extended hours were being underutilized by the public and exceeded the visitor hours of comparable institutions. Despite reducing hours, NARA research rooms will remain open from 9 AM to 5 PM six days a week. NARA's NAE museum in Washington, DC, including public exhibition of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, will remain open to the public from 10 AM to 5:30 PM, seven days a week, even under sequestration.

NARA's decision to reduce public hours at two facilities will have an impact on the public, but it is only a small part of a much larger and more detrimental impact of sequestration on NARA's long-term mission and operations. Sequestration will require NARA to defer preservation actions necessary to protect low- and moderate-risk records from deterioration and will delay efforts to conserve historically significant Government records on film, audio, or other special media. NARA will also reduce spending on the Federal government's primary tool for preserving electronic records, the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) information system, and will not be able to address concerns raised by ERA users in other Federal agencies and by NARA's Inspector General. NARA will reduce spending on maintenance of the 17 buildings that NARA owns and will defer all building repairs except where necessary to protect the safety of building occupants, public visitors, and the records housed in NARA facilities.

CLOSING STATEMENT

NARA has prepared a responsible plan that implements FY 2013 sequestration cuts in a way that preserves the agency mission and minimizes the impact on the public to the greatest possible extent. Much of NARA's sequestration cuts have been taken from administrative and support functions. However, sequestration imposes significant budget reductions on NARA that cannot be fully implemented without some noticeable impacts on service to the public.

The sequestration impacts presented today are minor compared to the actions NARA will have to take if reductions continue into FY 2014 and future years. NARA planned for sequestration for months prior to its implementation, but found few viable options for reducing spending beyond the \$19.7 million in required cuts. Before the American Taxpayer Relief Act (P.L. 112-240) reduced the FY 2013 sequestration amount, NARA was expecting sequestration to reduce the agency budget by more than \$30 million. NARA could not withstand a budget cut of this magnitude in FY 2014 without making more dramatic reductions in the services it provides to the public.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my formal statement. I look forward to continuing this discussion with you and the Members of the Committee.

David S. Ferriero Biography

David S. Ferriero was sworn in as 10th Archivist of the United States on November 13, 2009.

Previously, Mr. Ferriero served as the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the New York Public Libraries (NYPL). In this position he was part of the leadership team responsible for integrating the four research libraries and 87 branch libraries into one seamless service for users; and was in charge of collection strategy; conservation; digital experience and strategy; reference and research services; and education, programming, and exhibitions.

Before joining the NYPL in 2004, Mr. Ferriero served in top positions at two of the nation's major academic libraries, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA, and Duke University in Durham, NC.

Mr. Ferriero earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English literature from Northeastern University in Boston and a master's degree from the Simmons College of Library and Information Science, also in Boston. He served in the Navy during the Vietnam War.